

# 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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September 2006

## **FIRST OF THE FALL JUNEAU AUDUBON EVENING MEETINGS: OCTOBER 12 AT DIPAC, 7:00 P.M.**

### **Election of Officers/Board news**

**by Brenda Wright, Juneau Audubon Society President**

Come join us at our annual meeting October 12 to elect the Juneau Audubon chapter officers and enjoy the aquarium at DIPAC. We will be meeting at DIPAC for this one occasion and will provide refreshments. We are electing president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary. This year we have Jeff Sauer as candidate for president, Mark Schwan for vice-president and Liz Blecker for treasurer. As of the deadline for the Raven, we were still seeking candidates for secretary. If you are interested in being an officer or helping with any of our standing committees: conservation, membership, newsletter, or public market just call or e-mail any of the officers listed in the newsletter.

### **SATURDAY WILD 2006**

Saturday Wild is a history/nature walk sponsored by Juneau Audubon on the 2nd Saturday each month from June through October. We had a low tide walk in June, an alpine flower and bird walk in July, mushrooms in August and **September 9 meet at the Perseverance Trailhead, 9:30 a.m. to visit the Last Chance Mining Museum and geology of Basin Road with Cathy Connor and Renee Hughes.**



*Photo by Sheila Bateman*

“Mushrooms in our home town” was a great success in August. Over 50 people showed up at the end of River Road to hunt for mushrooms and hear the leader, Dave Gregovich, talk about their natural history and edibility. The area around the Mendenhall River proved to be saturated with many types of mushrooms, even a few that stumped the expert! To maximize the number of mushrooms to discuss, Dave sent every one out to collect a few and then bring them back. The small table used to display the “catch” was over loaded and mushrooms were falling off as every one returned with one or more interesting finds. We are really lucky to have such

knowledgeable volunteers to share their favorite hobbies with us. **We hope you can join us for the next walk on September 9th.**

### **WEDNESDAY BIRD WALKS—DOWNTOWN** By Beth Peluso

The Wednesday bird walks survived a soggy summer, and we even saw some birds! People who attended were a good mix of local regulars and out-of town visitors, from places as far away as New Zealand and South Africa. Early in the spring we watched the birds arrive: violet-green and barn swallows, ruby-crowned kinglets, Bonaparte's gulls, fox sparrows, and Townsend's warblers to name a few. Especially for the visiting folks, fairly common water birds such as harlequin ducks, pigeon guillemots, and marbled murrelets were a treat. Later in the summer we had some great looks at warbler families flitting around.

Some good pockets of birds, especially warblers, are up Gastineau Avenue behind downtown, by the governor's mansion, and along the waterfront by Gold Creek. The walks will continue until the end of September. **We meet at Rainbow Foods by the coffee stand to head out from noon to 1:00. Come join us!**

#### **(Continued from: Brenda Wright, Juneau Audubon President)**

The new Summer 2006 Chapter Networker publication is now available online! Full of news, best practices, photos, tools and tips, the Networker is designed specifically for all Chapter leaders. The newsletter can be found at <http://www.audubon.org/local/cn/networker.html> -- readers can scroll through the text directly online, or download a pdf file to print it out in its traditional format.

It has been a learning experience to be president of the Juneau Audubon Chapter. Thanks and I will be seeing all of you at the public meetings.

Keep in touch with your local Juneau Audubon events and meetings on the web page [www.juneau-audubon-society.org](http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org) It has a local bird checklist, lecture schedules, guided bird walk schedules, and past newsletters. (Thanks to our webmaster, George Utermohle).

#### **Conservation Notes:**

Our conservation chair, Sari Saunders, has moved on, so I'd like to just mention a few conservation items that have deadlines in the coming months: Juneau Access Road, pesticide use, and favorite beaches. If you have any desire to help write letters for Juneau Audubon conservation concerns, please contact any board member.

DEC announced a public comment period for pesticide applications in public places. The information can be found online at [http://www.dec.state.ak.us/public\\_notices.htm](http://www.dec.state.ak.us/public_notices.htm) and the deadline is September 15, 2006 at 5:00 pm.

City and Borough of Juneau has a public comment period on the proposed uses of funds from the Federal Secure Rural Schools and Community self-determination act of 2000. The city may receive up to o \$865,000 in title III funds. Juneau Audubon urges you to consider the options proposed by the state and encourage CBJ to use a portion of the money to buy the last 6 acre inholding in the Eagle Beach/Boy Scout camp for the public.

Comment period ends September 27, 2006. Mail or deliver comments to: CBJ clerk's office, 155 S. Seward St. Juneau, AK 99801. (If you have questions about this or would like to see the CBJ proposed uses, call the city clerk at 568-5278)

**CALL TO ACTION: Nominate an “Endangered Beach” Today**

Does your beach face an uncertain future? Has its long-term health been jeopardized? If so, nominate your beach for the America’s Most Endangered Beaches report to be released in the summer of 2007. This ground breaking report will shine a national spotlight on local beaches that face environmental peril and put human health at risk. Juneau Audubon is considering nominating the Berners Bay estuary. If you have a beach you would like to nominate please contact Brenda for the nomination form.

***The deadline for nomination is December 15, 2006.***

**REPORT ON THE JUNEAU BIRDATHON** By Steve Zimmerman

The Audubon Alaska Office in Anchorage is the National Audubon Society’s state office in Alaska. Matt Kirchhoff and I are on the Board of Directors for Audubon Alaska and for the second year in a row we decided to do a birdathon to raise money for that office. After quite a bit of planning we chose Saturday May 28<sup>th</sup> to do the birdathon.

Like almost every other day this summer, when we got up at about 4:45 a.m. it was pouring out. After several calls to our birdathon team members it was obvious that rain or no rain, there was no other day for the next couple of weeks when we could get the team back together again. So, off we went into the silence of an early morning, rainy day in Juneau. Our first bird, at about 6:15 a.m., was an American Dipper on a nest up Fish Creek that Mary Willson had told us about. After that we headed down Fish Creek where very few birds were singing. Fortunately, there were several species of waterbirds visible from the mouth of Fish Creek where we huddled under a large spruce tree trying to keep our spotting scope dry. And then, very slowly, the rain started to let up and birds started singing. By the time we left Fish Creek about 8:45 a.m. we had heard or seen 42 species. A light rain continued for another hour or two, but by late morning it had pretty well diminished to occasional showers.

In order to better canvass Juneau we had divided our birdathon team into two groups. Paul Suchanek, Rich Gordon and I covered the area from Douglas Island to the Mendenhall River system. Mark Schwan, Gus Van Vliet, Jeff Sauer and Matt covered the area from the southern Dredge Lakes and Community Garden areas on out the road. When we finished the birdathon and all got back together again at about 5:15 p.m. we discovered that the two groups had found an amazing total of 107 birds! Highlights included several Blue-winged Teal, a Redhead, a Red Knot, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, four Blackpoll Warblers and a Brown-headed Cowbird. Send me an e-mail request ([stevezimmerman@gci.net](mailto:stevezimmerman@gci.net)) if you would like a copy of the entire list of birds we recorded.

Our birdathon raised over \$4,600 for the Audubon Alaska Office. Many, many thanks to all the people who so generously contributed their time or money to our efforts.

**JUNEAU AUDUBON AND EAGLE OPTICS DONATE BINOCULARS TO  
PIONEERS' HOME** By Mark Schwann

Earlier this year one of our local members visited the Juneau Pioneers' Home and presented an overview on the birds of Juneau. A second visit focused on a discussion of binoculars along with a "hands-on" session where residents could get a feel for how to use different styles of binoculars and to determine which kinds of binoculars would be easiest to use by Home residents. Audubon then worked with Eagle Optics, a major optical supply retailer in Wisconsin, and purchased three binoculars to donate to the Pioneers' Home. Eagle Optics very generously matched the purchase, giving Audubon six binoculars for the price of three! Audubon has since presented these binoculars, along with two birding field guides, to the staff and residents at the Home. They have a great opportunity to view birds, as the main day-use room directly overlooks the marsh on the northwest side, and it is clear that some of the residents are very interested in birds. Audubon hopes to arrange for local birders to visit the home and watch birds with the people there.

**TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR TESHEKPUK LAKE** By Stan Senner,  
Executive Director, Audubon Alaska

For the last several years, one of the top priorities in Audubon's Alaska State Office has been protection of critical wildlife habitats around Teshekpuk Lake in the northeast part of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). Unfortunately, time is running out. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has tentatively scheduled an oil and gas lease sale for the end of September, after having signed a Record of Decision last January opening 100 percent of the area to leasing.

Teshekpuk Lake is the second largest lake in Alaska, and the wetlands around it are of national and international importance for wildlife. In fact, up to 37,000 Brant—30 percent of all Brant in the Pacific Flyway—gather there to molt, along with tens of thousands of Greater White-fronted Geese, Snow Geese, and Canada Geese. Uncounted numbers of migratory birds also nest or stop over in the area, including other waterfowl, shorebirds, loons, terns, and songbirds. The 45,000-animal Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd also uses the area, which is of great importance as a subsistence resource for North Slope residents.

The waterfowl experts in the Pacific Flyway Council and at such organizations as Ducks Unlimited have counseled against fragmenting what should be an unbroken block of habitat north and east of Teshekpuk Lake, the heart of the goose molting habitat. Yet, if BLM proceeds with plans for a lease sale in this small area—less than 400,000 acres—fragmentation is exactly what will happen because of the roads, pipelines, drill pads, power lines, air strips, gravel mines and other infrastructure required in an industrial oilfield. The molting, flightless geese are easily stressed when disturbed by aircraft or people on the ground, which may reduce the birds' fitness and subsequent survival.

Audubon Alaska does not oppose expanded oil and gas activity in NPR-A, but the area around Teshekpuk Lake is one specific place that should be off limits. There is legal

action pending in federal district court, but if BLM moves ahead with a lease sale, the picture gets much more complicated. We are urging Alaskans to write the Secretary of the Interior asking that the lease sale be cancelled. Please send your letter to: Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240. For more information, go the web at [www.savetlake.org](http://www.savetlake.org) or [www.audubon.org/campaign/teshekpuk](http://www.audubon.org/campaign/teshekpuk). Thank you.

#### **RECENT MESSAGES ON EAGLECHAT [Eaglechat@yahoo.com](mailto:Eaglechat@yahoo.com)**

From Steve Zimmerman: On a Sunday (8/20) trip to Bartlett Cove we stopped to watch whales at Point Adolphus around 11:00 a.m. There were large flocks of Red-necked Phalaropes there and across Icy Strait into Glacier Bay. I would estimate several hundred birds. When we came out of Glacier Bay headed back to Juneau three hours or so later I saw only a few phalaropes but there was an incredible aggregation of Fork-tailed Storm Petrels that I tried to count but ended up conservatively estimating at a thousand birds. The birds were strung out in varying concentrations and the ship sailed through them for several minutes.

From Nat Drumheller: Several Gustavus residents who have boated in the area for years have remarked on the high numbers of seabirds in Icy Strait and Cross Sound this July and August. Northern Fulmars, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, Sooty Shearwaters, and Parasitic Jaegers are birds they have seen in unusually high numbers. A whale biologist who has seen many Red-necked Phalaropes over the years said she saw more phalaropes in Icy Strait this week than ever before.

From Bruce Paige: These are truly phenomenal numbers of both fulmars (Mark and Debi) and petrels in Icy Strait. Since 1968, I've never seen or heard of anything like this. During storms, petrels can be seen by the dozen, but a thousand!!!! Really amazing. Fulmars rarely poke in away from the open ocean. Something seems to be going on, possibly a) a disruption of food supplies in normal summering areas, or, b) a comparable upswing in food around Icy Strait-which is an unusually rich niche. Based on what I've seen this summer around the Gustavus Foreland, I doubt the latter. Of course, there could be many other factors, as well.

#### **BIRDS OF SUMMER IN THE KETCHIKAN AREA-by Teri Goucher**

Hopefully everyone has been enjoying the nice days this summer doing lots of outdoor activities! Summer is a busy time and a few great birds were seen in our area!

The small flock of **Band-tailed Pigeons** returned to nest at their usual location south of town.

There were also many sightings of **Caspian Terns** throughout Southeast Alaska this season; on the mid-town breakwater 6 individuals were seen, which is the largest flock ever reported for our area!

**Cedar waxwings** are numerous lately; their high-pitched, buzzy whistles often announce their presence.

Steve Heinl and Andy Piston, who have thankfully and consistently provided me with birding data, made a trip to Hyder during the first part of June. Hyder is a tiny community on the mainland 90 miles NE of Ketchikan. The huge glacial-fed Salmon River courses through a wide valley which is bordered by rugged, 4000 foot mountains and extensive mudflats, making a beautiful landscape and excellent birding! A couple of **Least Flycatchers** were heard singing persistently along the river, and a **Sora** made an appearance after responding to an imitation of its call. Among a mixed flock of swallows, 5 **Bank Swallows** were found soaring over the flats and a flock of 15 **Black Swifts** were seen on June 6.

A couple of **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were seen near Hyder and 2 more were seen in Ketchikan on July 31. There was also a single, much smaller **Cackling Goose** with a small flock of **Canada Geese** on the Hyder tidal flats. Finally, quite a few **Black-headed Grosbeaks** were seen, with 3 males together; this perhaps indicates another strong fall showing of the species!

Another interesting story from our area was reported by the Ketchikan Daily News. A pair of **Barn Swallows** have built a nest and are raising 3 chicks on the Alaska Marine Highway ferry Lituya! This ship travels 15 miles from Metlakatla to Ketchikan twice a day! The parents feed the chicks until the ferry sails a few miles out, and then they return to Annette Island to patiently await the return voyage. As the ship nears Annette once again, they fly out to meet the Lituya and to continue their parental duties! Amazingly, this is the second clutch of eggs for the pair--the first attempt failed to hatch!

The birds of Alaska continue to fascinate us, and how fortunate we are to not have to travel from far away to enjoy our wonderful natural wilderness!!

Last spring I chaperoned 14 Ketchikan High School students to Costa Rica for a week! We were all amazed by the wildness of the jungle on the Caribbean coast and were thrilled to see many sloths, 3 species of monkeys, iguanas, crocodiles, and of course awesome birds!!

Highlights include Slaty-tailed Trogons, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Blue-hooded and Olive-backed Euphonias, Oropendolas, Golden-hooded and Scarlet-rumped Tanagers and Keel-billed Toucans!

I'm sure a few kids learned to love birding on this trip!

#### **WRANGELL REPORT – AUGUST 2006** By Bonnie Demerjian

Maybe it can be attributed to our 'summer that wasn't' but Wrangell has seen the early appearance of cedar waxwings, the steady presence of white-winged crossbills and more frequent sightings and soundings of pine grosbeaks these past few months. Like the weather, the birds have left us wondering what the season really is. Usually late summer visitors, the cedar waxwings' high-pitched calls have been heard since early July, long before their favored mountain ash berries ripen.

Band-tailed pigeons were reported in July engaging in bobbing, courting behavior at a local feeder. Wrangell's proximity to the transboundary Stikine River permitted birders to

some other unusual sightings - a single Townsend's solitaire during late spring and a gray-cheeked thrush during a breeding bird survey.

Several active northern goshawk nests are being monitored in the Wrangell area including one newly discovered this summer. Identification of a nest on federal land mandates a 600 square foot buffer zone as well as 100 acres of protected land surrounding the nest. Juvenile northern goshawks are dispersing now, increasing the opportunity for fortunate birders to view them.

Soon, with trees nearly silent and skies a uniform gray, we'll be on the alert for southbound migrants to lighten our autumn days.

### **HAINES REPORT By Georgia Giacobbe**

This summer, the weather in Haines has been cooler and wetter than usual, typical for the rest of Southeast Alaska but not Haines. From my personal observations, it did not deter the birds--the regular bird populations arrived and thrived. We had a large share of Robins, with Wilson's Warblers, and Yellow Warblers, and Varied Thrushes abounding. Several Belted Kingfishers were seen flying about along Haines Highway about two mile and additionally at Clear Creek. The falcons also were abundant. Several Kestrels were observed in a variety of places and a Peregrine Falcon was spotted near the airport in early July. Farther up Haines Highway and out at Chilkat Lake, the Arctic Tern population returned, two Common Loons had one baby, and the Rufous Hummingbirds, Pine Siskins, and Chestnut-backed Chikadees all returned to the feeders. We also spotted a family of five new Red-breasted Mergansers on the lake, too.

On a trip to Flower Mountain, we chased a Spruce Grouse meandering along the road that eventually hid in the bushes. Unfortunately in the spring, you may have heard of the report of the male Trumpeter Swan that was killed in the valley. However, the female was able to go on and successfully rear a chick.

Earlier in the spring, as part of the Takshanuk Watershed Council observations, diverse spring migrations were noted coming up the river and Pyramid Harbor delta. Of special note—about a dozen Ross Geese were spotted.

**Overall for sea birds, the Haines observers noted a general decline in sea ducks, especially low numbers of surf scoters. This may be a trend that needs careful monitoring.**

And of human interest, an avid Haines birder, Pam Randles, returned to Haines on a month's leave from Qatar. She will be back to birding again in Haines next May.

**2006 GUSTAVUS SUMMER REPORT and PHOTO** By Nat Drumheller,  
natdrumheller@hotmail.com

Cool and damp sums it up in my mind. (I spent the summer working for the U.S. Forest Service out of Juneau and got snowed on in mid-June while doing bird surveys in the

alpine above Lemon Creek.) Late spring and early fall migrations appeared to merge for some birds, such as Lesser Yellowlegs, making it difficult to determine if the birds were on their way north or south.

It was a big year for **California Gulls**. Previously, California Gulls had been seen on occasion in Gustavus during the summer months. This year, small numbers were seen regularly throughout the summer. A record number of twenty-eight was observed on June 26.

**Caspian Terns** were present on the Gustavus beaches through the summer with a high count of twenty-eight on August 12 including two juveniles. There were unusual mid-summer sightings of **Hudsonian Godwits** with four reported on 6/26 and five on 7/28.

The hooting of **Northern Saw-whet Owls** was heard by many Gustavus residents this spring. A pair of saw-whet owls occupied a nest box in town for over two months and successfully raised young. It is believed that six young owls fledged from the box over a number of days beginning June 4. The presence of a good number of saw-whet owls in the area did not prevent a bumper crop of voles from laying waste to Gustavus gardens this summer.



On 5/28, a **Virginia Rail** was heard calling from rushes in a pond near the airport. This was the exact location of a Virginia Rail that called for several weeks last summer.

Several boaters remarked on seeing exceptionally high numbers of seabirds over the inland waters of Icy Strait and Cross Sound during late July and early August including **Northern Fulmars, Fork-tailed Storm Petrels, Sooty Shearwaters, and Parasitic Jaegers**. High numbers of **Red-necked Phalaropes** have been reported in this area recently (mid-August).

Thanks to the Gustavus residents who shared their observations, especially Bruce Paige.



#### **PETERSBURG BIRD REPORT By Don Cornelius**

I can report the appearance of three Eurasian Collared Doves in Petersburg. From all indications they seem to have arrived here on their own. Eurasian collared doves were accidentally introduced to the Bahamas in 1975 and have been spreading westward ever since. Until these birds reached our feeder they had been seen on Vancouver Island and in the Yukon, but never in Alaska. From feathers by our feeder we thought we had lost one to a cat, but several days later I saw all three doves again so presume it escaped.

## JUNEAU'S SUNNY POINT REPORT

Last week we had a Juvenile American Kestrel hanging around, maybe keeping dragonflies under control. The bird darted out caught a large dragonfly in the air, landed on a post where it pulled the wings off and then ate it piece by piece. This morning in the wind and the rain there are two peewees trying to catch breakfast and several warblers working over the vegetation looking for something to eat. Life can't be easy for these migrating birds in this weather.

### IRIS COLORS IN ANIMALS

I do not know if you have any interest in this, but at [irispigmentation.com](http://irispigmentation.com) there is a free list of published iris colors for 5,600 species of animals. More than 4,900 are of birds, but amphibian, reptile, and mammal species are also included. The list was collected for research purposes from field guides at the Library of Congress, the Wildlife Library of the Department of Interior and the various libraries at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. Morgan Worthy, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Ga. State University  
[morganworthy@mac.com](mailto:morganworthy@mac.com)  
[www.irispigmentation.com](http://www.irispigmentation.com)

### New Report Documents First Ever Multi-State Review of Feral Cat Impacts on Birds

By Linda Winter, Director, Cats Indoors! Campaign, American Bird Conservancy

ABC has published a new report, *Impacts of Feral and Free-ranging Cats on Bird Species of Conservation Concern: A Five-State Review of New York, New Jersey, Florida, California, and Hawaii*, which, for the first time, analyzes the effects that cats are having on some of America's most at-risk bird species at cat predation hotspots. The five-state review at [www.abcbirds.org/cats/NFWF.pdf](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/NFWF.pdf)

illuminates troubling threats to endangered species such as Piping Plover, California Clapper Rail, and Hawaiian Petrel, highlights the growing trend of managed cat colonies, and reviews applicable wildlife protection laws. The report was made possible through a generous grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

**Revised and Updated *Cats Indoors!* Web Page:** The *Cats Indoors!* Campaign web page has a new look with revised and updated fact sheets and a host of new information including the position statements on free-roaming cats of 16 organizations, and links to state wildlife agency and Audubon Society *Cats Indoors!* web pages. This information can be used by Campaign supporters to educate neighbors, friends, clients, local officials and others that cats and wildlife are safer when cats are kept indoors, and that humane, permanent removal of cats is needed to protect our native wildlife. One Campaign supporter, Bruce Vaughn from Boulder, CO, has shared with us his own innovative “**Cat Trails**” that he built to keep his cats safe from coyotes and other outdoor hazards. For information on how Mr. Vaughn built his cat run, [www.abcbirds.org/cats/CatTrails.pdf](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/CatTrails.pdf)

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**TO RECEIVE “THE RAVEN” BY EMAIL RATHER THAN A PAPER COPY,  
EMAIL Mary Lou King [kingfarm@ptialaska.net](mailto:kingfarm@ptialaska.net)**

## National Audubon Society Membership Application

For first time members or renewals to the National Audubon Society please mail this form to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 51001, Boulder, CO 80322-1001. You will receive the National *Audubon* Magazine plus Juneau Chapter newsletter *The Raven*.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20 (1-year introductory rate) \_\_\_\_\_ \$15 (1-year student/senior rate) \_\_\_\_\_ \$30 Basic renewal

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**President:** Brenda Wright, 789-4656, [president@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:president@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Vice-President:** Jeff Sauer, [vice-president@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:vice-president@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Secretary:** Steve Lewis, [secretary@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:secretary@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Treasurer:** Liz Blecker, 586-4210, [treasurer@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:treasurer@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Programs:** Matt Kirchhoff, 586-5816, [programs@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:programs@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Membership:** Donna Carroll, [membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:membership@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Education:** Beth Peluso, [education@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:education@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Publicity:** Amy Skilbred, [publicity@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:publicity@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Conservation:** [conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Field Trips:** Steve Zimmerman, 586-2597, [field-trips@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:field-trips@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Raven Editor:** Mary Lou King, 789-7540, [raven@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:raven@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Public Market** Ellen Anderson, 789-1412, [public-market@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:public-market@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Web Master:** George Utermohle, [webmaster@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:webmaster@juneau-audubon-society.org)

JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY  
PO BOX 021725  
JUNEAU, AK 99802

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