

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

December 2006

SOUTHEAST WILD, Public Nature Series December 14, Egan Library Room 112, 7:00 p.m.

JUNEAU'S LATE FALL AND EARLY WINTER BIRDS AS SEEN THROUGH 30 YEARS OF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Mark Schwan, local birder and CBC compiler will provide a brief history into the origins of the Christmas Bird Count, describe how the Juneau Christmas Bird Count is conducted, and characterize local avian abundance and diversity through a review of the count data. Along the way, Mark will show examples of how accessible count data are via the National Audubon website and what this means for analysis and interpretation, plus give his thoughts about what it is that makes this annual event so intriguing to birders. It should be informative, fun, and timely, as our program takes place just two days prior to this year's count in Juneau.

JANUARY 11, 2007 PROGRAM: Tour and Explore the Juneau Ice field with Dr. Eran Hood. Dr. Hood has been a professor at UAS with special studies on the Juneau ice field and hydrology of southeast wetlands. Join us in the New Year for an exciting program on Juneau's "back yard".

Juneau Audubon Society Public Market Booth By Brenda Wright

Thanks to all the volunteers that helped to sell our community famous home made jams, jellies, and relish! Mary Lou King and volunteers provided the expertise for our best sellers at the Public Market. Special thanks also to Ellen Anderson, our public market coordinator, for providing her beautiful and colorful bird ornaments, dealing with setting up and taking down of the booth, and time spent organizing. The nagoonberry jam lasted a whole hour this year, but all the other jams and relish were gone by Saturday afternoon. This is one of Juneau Audubon's two fundraisers a year, so thanks again to all who helped to make it a success!

Nature Craft Booth For Kids: Thanks to the 6 High School Students, Amy Skilbred and all the others who helped to give the kids attending the market with their parents, a fun activity while their parents shopped.

The 2006 Juneau Christmas Bird Count By Mark Schwan

The Juneau CBC will be held this year on Saturday, December 16, the first Saturday during the designated count period, of December 14 through January 5th. The count period is the time during which the individual bird counts can take place. As usual, volunteers should meet at either of the two McDonalds Restaurants no later than 8am on count day, with appropriate attire and binoculars. People interested in counting in the downtown, Douglas, and north Douglas Island areas should meet at the downtown restaurant; birders wishing to work the Lemon Creek, airport, Mendenhall Valley and Auke Bay areas should meet at the valley restaurant. As always, there will be a potluck after the count to share in the events of the day and to conduct the tally of birds and species seen. The time and location for the potluck will be announced at the McDonald gathering in the morning of the count.

Last year there were 38 Christmas Bird Counts conducted in Alaska and 13 in the Southeastern region. Kodiak led all Alaskan counts with 78 species on count day, with Glacier Bay leading Southeast counts with 73 species. Juneau tallied 72 species on Count day.

Count data are now accessible as never before and compilers are entering results directly into the database via the internet. Go to <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html> and explore.

For more information on this year's Juneau Christmas Bird Count, you can call Mark Schwan, at 789-9841.

Christmas Bird Counts planned in Southeast Alaska for the upcoming Count period:

Count Location	Date of Count	Compiler/Contact	Phone Number
Chilkat	To be announced	Dan Egolf Tim Shield	766-2876
Craig-Klawock	December 16	Larry Dickerson Marla Dillman	826-1619 826-1617
Glacier Bay	December 16	Bruce Paige	697-2262
Haines	December 23	Dan Egolf Tim Shield	766-2876 Alaska Back Country Outfitter Store
Juneau	December 16	Mark Schwan Gus van Vliet	789-9841
Ketchikan	December 16	Andrew Piston	hm: 247-6553 wk: 225-9677
Mitkof Island	?	Bill Pawuk	772-3985
Port Alexander	December 16	Anissa Berry-Frick	568-3985
Sitka	December 16	Victoria Vosburg	747-7821
Skagway	December 16	Elaine Furbish Sandy Snell-Dobert	983-2049
Tenakee Springs	To be announced	Beret Barnes	736-2226
Thorne Bay	December 16	Susan Howell	828-3263
Wrangell	December 16	Bonnie Demerjian	874-3665
Yakutat	?	Susan Oehlers	474-7882

NOVEMBER NEWS FROM KETCHIKAN-by Teri Goucher

Between early season snowstorms and chilly nights, a few interesting birds were seen here in November.

The seasonal flocks of **Common Merganser** and various bay ducks such as **Barrow's Goldeneye** and **Harlequin Duck** have returned all along our shoreline once again.

Numerous **Song Sparrows** are around and there were a few sightings of **Golden-crowned Sparrow** and **Tree Sparrow** in our area. Ketchikan usually hosts several **White-throated Sparrows** each fall and a third individual was spotted 14 miles north of town at Jerry Koerner's garden. He has consistently had this species visit annually, possibly the best regular occurrence of this species in the state! Jerry also had a **Nashville Warbler** there the first weekend of November.



Ward Lake never fails to have a good variety of species and is an easy 1.3 mile hike around this scenic refuge. This area has become a more inviting habitat since the road to through traffic was closed years ago. A **Pied-billed Grebe** was seen on 11-5 and a **Virginia Rail** was there briefly on 11-6. There are about 10 records for this rail species in the state, mostly from Southeast.

In town, a colorful male **Purple Finch** made an appearance and an **Anna's Hummingbird** was seen at a feeder. There are about 15 records for the Anna's which is a casual species in our area.

A rather late **American Pipit** was in a yard near the shore a few miles south of town on 11-20.

Ketchikan will hold the annual **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** on December 16th. Contact Andy Piston at 225-5195 for more information. It's always fun to see the results of this count which has provided valuable bird data for 106 years, and is nicely compiled in the American Birds publication.

Hopefully everyone will keep warm and keep on birding through these winter months!

HAINES REPORT By Georgia Giacobbe

This month's report includes some scattered sightings from Haines Highway, the Bald Eagle Preserve, and Chilkat Lake. Closer to the beginning of the month, before the bitter cold weather set in, a report from Chilkat Lake included on November 5 four Black Scoters. Several nights previously, a Screech Owl was heard on the south shore of the lake, and six Trumpeter Swan—two adults and four juveniles—came ashore on one of the islands to feed.



In the Bald Eagle preserve, Alaska Parks and Recreation counted 1,421 Bald Eagles on November 6. Because the rivers were so high this year, the eagles were scattered and difficult to count. By the week of November 20, however, the numbers were declining already. At 20 mile on Haines Highway, at least a dozen Trumpeter Swans were seen feeding with Bald Eagles and Ravens.

The owls in the Chilkat Valley are now being tracked closely. As reported in the *Chilkat Valley News*, Carrie Kinison and her husband Mike are volunteers for the Southeast Alaska Owl Network. They survey the valley once a month between 34 and 40 Mile Haines Highway and listen for the calls at night. They usually can identify some type of owl during their survey time, although they came up empty in October. They usually survey at the end of the month, so perhaps we will have November's report next month. In the past they have actually seen and heard a palm-sized Western Screech Owl and a Barred Owl.

GUSTAVUS SIGHTINGS October 26-November 27, 2006

The Gustavus/Glacier Bay Christmas Bird Count will be on Saturday, December 16. For information contact Bruce Paige, count compiler, at 907-697-2262.

A **Western Grebe** was in Bartlett Cove 10/31 through at least 11/2 adding to only a few records for the area. Two **American Coots** were observed in late October with one on Bartlett Lake and another on a pond near the airport.

Northern Goshawks were present in good numbers through the month. Adult goshawks were observed targeting **Wilson's Snipes** on two different dates with success on one of the attempts. An immature goshawk was seen attacking Short-eared Owls on two dates. In the first observation, the goshawk killed the owl and carried it away. In the second observation, the goshawk successfully pinned the owl to the ground, but dropped it while trying to fly off with it, perhaps as a result of haste due to the presence of the observer. The owl recovered and, after the goshawk landed, flew around the goshawk in circles barking.

Single **Rough-legged Hawks** continued to be seen through the end of October.

Fourteen hundred **Dunlin** and three hundred **Rock Sandpipers** are the largest numbers reported for those species so far this fall/winter, but birding the beaches has been difficult due to the weather. Some late shorebird observations include four **Long-billed**



Dowitchers on 11/5, single **Black-bellied Plovers** on 10/28 and 11/1, a **Pacific Golden-Plover** on 11/7 and 11/8, a lone **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** on 11/8, and a **Greater Yellowlegs** through the middle of November.

Owls... **Northern Pygmy-Owls** continued in abundance through the period. On a recent afternoon as a snow storm subsided, a pygmy-owl was seen looking out of an owl nest box. **Short-eared Owls** were common over the beach grasslands until

the end of the period when they became scarce. Apart from the two goshawk attacks mentioned above, one Short-eared Owl was found dead. Two **Snowy Owls** were observed, an immature on 11/8 and an adult on 11/15. A **Barred Owl** was seen on 11/2. There were multiple reports of strange sounds in the night that may have been Barred Owls communicating. Barred Owls are still rare in Gustavus. A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found dead on 11/23. Single **Northern Hawk Owls** were observed on 10/29 and 11/24.

A **Northern Flicker** frequenting backyard suet-feeders was a hybrid of the red and yellow-shafted subspecies. Four **Horned Larks** were seen on 11/14, with three continuing to be seen through 11/23. There were several sightings of small flocks of **Bohemian Waxwings**. Four **European Starlings** were with small numbers of robins on 10/29 and 10/30. **Snow Buntings** have been eating the beach rye exposed above the snow with as many as five hundred in a single flock, and a few **Lapland Longspurs** are still around. **Pine Grosbeaks** were common during the period, and **Common Redpolls** arrived with the cold weather in the later half of the period.

Thanks to the following for sharing their observations: Bruce Paige, Phoebe Vanselow, Tania Lewis, Sean Neilson, Greg Streveler, Julie Vathke, and Sally McLaughlin. By Nat Drumheller, natdrumheller@hotmail.com

SITKA REPORT By Matt Goff

The Sitka Bird Count is planned for Saturday, December 16. A pre-count Meeting will take place 7pm Thursday, December 14 at the Raptor Center. The post-count wrap-up is planned for 4:30pm Saturday at the Raptor Center.

Recent sightings of interest in Sitka (that are relatively unusual for the area) have included a Nashville Warbler, a pair of American Coots, a Lapland Longspur, a Snow Bunting, a Snowy Owl, and a flock of Common Redpolls. Someone also reported a Magpie not too far out of town.



The series of talks for the Sheldon Jackson College birding seminar were well attended. Thanks to the following people for their contributions. Marge and Tedin told us about where to go birding in Sitka. Kitty LaBounty spoke about gardening and landscaping with our avian friends in mind (she also helped organize the seminar). Dr. Victoria Vosburg of the Alaska Raptor Center gave an informative presentation on avian anatomy and physiology. Carrie Hisaoka spoke of her experiences working on the Yukon Flats studying the nesting ecology of the Lesser Scaup. Matt Kirchhoff of the ADF&G traveled from Juneau to share what has been learned about Marbled Murrelets in Southeast Alaska. Michelle Kissling of USFWS and Steve Lewis of ADF&G also traveled from Juneau to present the research they've been doing on owls in Southeast Alaska. From them we learned that Sitka seems to have lots of Western Screech Owls, relative to the rest of the region. Finally, Andrew Thoms spoke about warblers, where they come from, and how they spend their winters. The seminar will continue in the new year. Check <http://www.sitkanature.org/birdseminar.html> in the coming weeks to see the schedule.

From: Eaglechat@yahoogroups.com

Sandpipers still at Eagle Beach

Posted by: "Paul Suchanek" Tue Nov 28, 2006 5:46 pm (PST)

Since the wind in Lynn Canal finally calmed down, I went out to Eagle Beach today and found about 80 dunlin and 250 rock sandpipers. The tide was still relatively high so more shorebirds might have showed up later. Not that many gulls around but I did see a few Thayer's gulls. It was pretty icy out on the flats so watch out if you go out there – I managed to take a fall.

The other day, I also located a pair of black scoters in with the surf scoter flocks between North Douglas boat launch and False Outer Point. Scoters seem to have been much more abundant than normal in this area.

Re: Thayer's vs Herring gulls

Posted by: "Paul Suchanek" Tue Nov 28, 2006 10:52 pm (PST)

Winter is a pretty tough time to tackle gull identification here. There are hundreds of glaucous-winged gulls for every herring or Thayer's gull out there (there are also hybrid Glaucous-Winged X Herring gulls which are a serious identification problem). If you can find a single large gull with black wingtips, it is often very difficult to identify with any certainty. Thayer's gulls are generally smaller and have thinner bills than the hybrids and herring gulls, making them more like a mew gull in appearance. The wing-tips are also grayish on the underside unlike herring gulls which are blackish underneath. Eagle Beach is about the only place in the Juneau area where I have seen definite Thayer's gulls in the winter – they often occur in small flocks so it's a bit easier to identify them. I rarely find herring gulls out there in the winter. If you want to dive off the deep end on gull identification, I do have the newest 600 page book on it.

NORTH DOUGLAS CROSSING OF THE GASTINEAU CHANNEL

The City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) is continuing its efforts to work toward development of a North Douglas Crossing of the Gastineau Channel. The CBJ Assembly is focusing its consideration on the three alternative crossing locations that best meet the community's need for the crossing:

1. Vanderbilt Hill Road area
2. Sunny Drive area
3. Yandukin Drive area

The Assembly is inviting the Juneau public to share their ideas, concerns and preferences with the CBJ. The results of this public involvement program will assist the Assembly in determining a Juneau community-preferred alternative for the North Douglas crossing. It will also inform the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities about this community preference, when it proceeds in the future with environmental analysis, route selection and conceptual design for the crossing.

The CBJ has contracted with Sheinberg Associates, a local community planning firm, to conduct the public involvement project. **Contact Jan Caulfield, Sheinberg Associates, 204 N. Franklin St., Ste. 1, Juneau, AK 99801, and (907)586-3141 janc@gci.net for more information and time and location to planned meetings.**

NORTH DOUGLAS CROSSING OF THE GASTINEAU CHANNEL

By Jim King

The most reasonable, perhaps the only viable alternative for a second road to Douglas Island, is a crossing at Salmon Creek. This would be clear of Mendenhall State Game Refuge and airport safety areas, where a bridge sufficient to pass commercial fishing boats could be built.

The Mendenhall State Game Refuge is a jewel in the City of Juneau. Most of the big coastal cities of America have sacrificed their tidelands to superficial commercial interests. Settlers were attracted to Boston, New York, San Francisco Bay and other coastal areas for the great wealth of sea mammals, fish, shellfish, water birds and other edible creatures. Unrestrained development destroyed that wealth. Those communities now struggle to save or restore snippets of that former wealth.

After World War II, enormous highway building funds were authorized. Highway engineers planned routes avoiding private land and utilizing public open space including parks and refuges. The overwhelming public rejection of that concept resulted in the prohibition of using federal highway funds to build in parks and refuges. Inconvenient sometimes, but is essential to preserving the heritage of the American people.

Trying to evade the national concern for protecting tidelands by spending local dollars is not in the best interest of Juneau's future, a town oriented to the natural environment, outdoor activities and the world wide tourist industry.

Juneauites need to speak out strongly against the effort to sacrifice any of our wetland refuge for a superficial automotive benefit.

CHANGING LIGHTS TO MAKE COMMUNICATION TOWERS SAFER FOR MIGRATING BIRDS From: ABC Conservation Innovations

One of the greatest perils to migrating birds is the more than 80,000 lighted communication towers that span the nation. Tower lights confuse night-flying birds and actually attract them, resulting in collisions that kill as many as 50 million birds each year. Research indicates that simply switching from solid state to strobe lights can significantly reduce avian mortality. Pressure from ABC and its partners resulted in the FAA issuing a memo recommending the use of white strobe lights as the preferred lighting system on towers, reducing the threat to migrating species such as Scarlet Tanager and Golden-winged Warbler. However, the FCC, which regulates all communication towers, still refuses to adopt reasonable US Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines that will make the towers safer for birds. We need your help to persuade the FCC to enact simple measures that will save the lives of millions of birds annually.

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

Name _____
Address _____
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_____ My check for \$ _____ is enclosed

_____ Please bill me

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If you prefer to support Juneau Audubon Society only, and receive 9 months of *The Raven*, send the completed form above with \$10 to: Membership Chair, PO Box 21725, Juneau, AK 99802. Please let us know if you prefer to have the newsletter sent by electronic _____ e-mail or paper copy_____

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