

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 33, Number 5

Juneau Audubon Society

January 2007

SOUTHEAST WILD, Public Nature Series January 11, Egan Lecture Hall (EG 112) 7:00 p.m.

JUNEAU'S ICE FIELDS: RESEARCH AND ADVENTURE

TOUR AND EXPLORE THE JUNEAU ICEFIELD WITH DR. ERAN HOOD -- Join us for a trip to Juneau's big icy back yard and learn about the ongoing research by UAS. Dr. Hood also enjoys alpine climbing in and around SE Alaska.

February 8 Program: "Underwater Coral videos" by Bob Stone National Marine Fisheries scientist Bob Stone shows off some of the beautiful coral species from our watery "front" yard.

BIRDER PROFILES: by Jeff Sauer Juneau Audubon President

This month we profile two serious birders in Gustavus, Bruce Paige and Nat Drumheller. Their names appear regularly in this publication as well as on Eaglechat. Associated with their names are always interesting reports of the birds seen in Gustavus.

Bruce Paige

Bruce has been birding in Gustavus since 1968. That was the year he arrived in Gustavus, and also the year that he started the Christmas Bird Count in Gustavus. He has been the compiler for the bird count in Gustavus ever since. In his work-life he was the Chief Naturalist for Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. He did that job for 26 years and retired in 1994. Prior to Glacier Bay, Bruce worked for the park service in Everglades National Park (1964 to 68), and Death Valley National, Monument (1962-64), among other places. His strong interest in birds developed in college in California, at Humboldt State, and has been going on now for decades. These days, as for years, Bruce can be found out birding, and in the process walking several miles, every single day. Besides the Christmas Bird Count compiler for Gustavus, Bruce is also the author of the local bird checklist: Glacier Bay National Park Bird Checklist.

Nat Drumheller

If Bruce Paige is the senior bird expert in Gustavus, then Nat Drumheller is the junior expert. Nat is a frequent contributor to Eaglechat, as well as the compiler of the Gustavus quarterly bird reports, going to the state compilers (Thede Tobish), and then on to the American Birding Association. Nat became a very serious birder upon his arrival in Gustavus in 1999. He moved to Gustavus from Washington State, where he spent a lot of time backpacking, identifying plants, and some birding. But it was in Gustavus where he really got serious about birds. Nat works seasonally for the Glacier Bay

National Park doing jobs such as a bio tech on bear habitat work. He also works odd labor jobs here and there in Gustavus. Last summer he also came to Juneau to work for Gwen Bayliss on her Alaska Land Bird Monitoring Survey. Nat is out birding a lot in Gustavus, and in particular out walking those Gustavus beaches, that seem to produce such good finds. With a partner named Phoebe (Vanselow - also a serious birder) he must be a serious birder.

34th GLACIER BAY/GUSTAVUS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY

By Bruce Page

On December 16, 16 observers walked, skied, boated, and drove around the Gustavus Foreland and Lower Glacier Bay, recording 62 bird species and 10,747 individuals (with an additional 5 species seen during count week). This was the lowest species total in a decade, but was the fourth highest number of individuals. The weather on the count was favorable, with the moderate wind making it a bit difficult to count and identify water birds at any distance. However, a very cold and snowy November affected the count in several ways. The deep snow cover on count day created a much harsher environment for birds than has been the case during recent mild winters. Land birds particularly seemed reduced in variety and numbers. The snow also made it difficult for parties to get around and fully work their areas. Lastly, there were fewer observers, since many local residents headed outside to warmer climes this winter.

No species new to the count were added this year, though a barred owl was heard during the count week. Highlights included 116 pacific loons (all time count high), 2 sharp-shinned hawks, 2 peregrine falcons, 22 black oystercatchers (all time count high), 1400 dunlin, and a snowy owl. Notable by their absence this year were northern pintail, Wilson's snipe, belted kingfisher (though seen on count week), winter wren, and pine siskin.



KETCHIKAN DECEMBER REPORT

By Teri Goucher

Our Christmas bird count was completed this year by 25 participants in 16 groups and one feeder watcher. December 16th was a pleasant partly cloudy day, although a snow shower moved through just before nightfall.

Ketchikan's area produced 65 species on count day and a total of 71 species were tallied during count week.

Interesting birds seen during count week include **Purple Finch**, **Northern Shrike**, **White-throated Sparrow**, and **Common Redpoll**. The **Anna's Hummingbird** is still staying close to a feeder with a nearby heat lamp at a home by the high school. The beautiful male **Wood Duck** still frequents a quiet eddy on Ketchikan Creek.

Our rarest count day bird was a **Northern Mockingbird** found at a hillside neighborhood by a visiting birder with Andy Piston. This is only the second sighting of this species in Ketchikan; the first record was in April 1998 south of town! Statewide, mockingbirds are considered accidental where they have occurred in Fairbanks, the south coastal region, and in several towns in the southeast panhandle.

Early in December we enjoyed many flocks of over fifty **Bohemian Waxwings** feasting on berries, several **Downy Woodpeckers**, **Bonaparte's Gulls** and a **Black-Billed Magpie** north of town. Three **Trumpeter Swans** are wintering at Ward Lake with their resonate calls echoing in the valley.

A big thanks to Andy Piston for organizing the entire event, compiling data, and adding to our species total for our very successful Christmas Bird Count! Thankfully daylight is increasing now and so do our chances for more birding opportunities as the year 2007 begins!!!

2006 JUNEAU CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Juneau's Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 16. Volunteers endured challenging conditions throughout most of the day, and the previous six weeks of winter resulted in below average totals for both the species and individual bird counts. Fifty-nine species and just 8,439 birds were seen during the day. Highlights included the two Wood Ducks, and a new high count for Gadwall.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Count or CW only</u>		
Canada Goose	814	Rock Pigeon	62
Wood Duck	2	Northern Pygmy-owl	cw
Gadwall	31	Short-eared Owl	1
Eurasian Wigeon	cw	Belted Kingfisher	1
American Wigeon	81	Downy Woodpecker	cw
Mallard	2,934	Hairy Woodpecker	3
Northern Pintail	5	Northern Flicker	cw
Green-winged Teal	47	Northern Shrike	cw
Greater Scaup	259	Steller's Jay	47
Lesser Scaup	3	Black-billed Magpie	39
Unidentified Scaup	4	Northwestern Crow	660
Harlequin Duck	67	Common Raven	518
Surf Scoter	179	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	116
White-winged Scoter	249	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2
Black Scoter	1	Brown Creeper	10
Unidentified Scoters	23	Winter Wren	2
Long-tailed Duck	8	American Dipper	7
Bufflehead	81	Golden-crowned Kinglet	28
Common Goldeneye	123	Unidentified Kinglets	6
Barrow's Goldeneye	182	American Robin	1
Unidentified Goldeneyes	24	Varied Thrush	cw
Hooded Merganser	8	European Starling	cw
Common Merganser	37	Bohemian Waxwing	3
Red-breasted Merganser	54	Song Sparrow	13
Common Loon	4	Dark-eyed Junco	88
Yellow-billed Loon	2	Snow Bunting	60
Horned Grebe	46	Pine Grosbeak	6
Red-necked Grebe	14	White-winged Crossbill	cw
Pelagic Cormorant	19	Unidentified Crossbills	2
Unidentified Cormorants	1	Common Redpoll	66
Great Blue Heron	5	Pine Siskin	1
Bald Eagle	131	TOTAL SPECIES ON COUNT	
Northern Goshawk	1	DAY	59
Killdeer	1	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	8,439
Black Turnstone	2	Count Week Species	9
Rock Sandpiper	cw	Total Species for week	68
Dunlin	306		
Mew Gull	46		
Herring Gull	7		
Glauous-winged Gull	864		
Unidentified Gulls	1		
Common Murre	2		
Pigeon Guillemot	2		
Marbled Murrelet	27		



SEABIRDS HITTING THE SLOPES AT EAGLECREST By Matt Kirchhoff

When most people are just waking up for work, Kristen Romanoff is already out skiing. Two or 3 times a week, she and several friends hike up the mountain at Eaglecrest ski area for some telemarking in trackless powder -- their way illuminated by moonlight, and the narrow beam of their headlamps. This winter, they've had company. In the hour before sunrise, like clockwork, they've been hearing the keer call of Marbled Murrelets -- scores of them -- flying up Fish Creek Valley and Eaglecrest ski area, headed for ... well ... WHAT? The Ptarmigan Chair lift?

These are *SEA*-birds. Seabirds are supposed to spend their lives on the water, coming ashore only to nest ... in *summer*. Whereas other seabirds nest on cliffs or in burrows, Marbled Murrelets typically fly miles inland, looking for a suitable moss platform in the bough of an old-growth tree. The location of this bird's nest was one of the longest-running questions in the bird world. The first unquestioned nest was found in a tree in California, in 1974. Now, it appears, we're on the cusp of describing their après-ski habits as well.

Gus van Vliet, a local Juneau birder who has long been monitoring Marbled Murrelets, says this odd winter behavior has been known for awhile. And it's pretty common in Southeast Alaska. Anyone with the perseverance to get up before dawn, in winter, and position themselves in the right place is likely to hear them. Appropriately enough, another dependable location to hear these birds is on Perseverance trail, behind town.

Gus introduced me to someone who, quite possibly, has heard more Marbled Murrelets in winter than anyone else. That person is Jim Fowler, a local artist, a busy family man, and a guy with a serious murrelet habit. By serious, I mean he drove to Eaglecrest to listen for Marbled Murrelets before work (3 or 4 AM in the summer), one day a week, 40 weeks a year, for 3 YEARS! When asked why, Jim, in typical low-key style, says "I just enjoyed starting my day early". The unique data Jim voluntarily gathered over those 3 years contributed to a scientific publication on the unusual behavior of these birds.

During the recent cold snap, with temperatures hovering around zero, Jim was back at it again. Halfway up Eaglecrest Road, his truck pulled tight against a snow bank, Jim held a penlight with his mouth and scribbled rapidly as Julie Koehler (a new recruit to winter murrelet watching) called out the birds. It was exhilarating. In 30 minutes they tallied 119 Marbled Murrelets, each heading somewhere up this wintry, snowbound valley. Questions about where they end up, what they do when they get there, and why, are complete unknowns.

In the last decade, millions of dollars have been spent studying Marbled Murrelets in the Lower 48 and Canada. In those places it is a threatened species, declining in number as the old trees it depends on disappear. In Alaska, and particularly near Juneau, this species is unusually abundant, and scientists would like to know exactly why. It's nice that while most of Juneau sleeps, a few hardy volunteers are working to answer that question ... one cold morning at a time.

Matt Kirchhoff, a member of Juneau Audubon and a biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, invites anyone interested in experiencing early-morning murrelet "watching" to give him a call at 465-4328.

Conservation Issues in 2007 - How will we decide? Matt Kirchhoff - Conservation Chair

As the incoming conservation chair of Juneau Audubon, I'd like to offer a few comments on how this organization chooses the issues it works on, and how you, as members, can help direct the board in this work in 2007.

As a regional Audubon Chapter, there are literally hundreds of issues from Haines to Ketchikan that our organization may choose to get involved in. The range of issues is very wide. Below are some of the issues begging conservation advocacy work in the past year:

- Tongass Land Management Plan by USFSI
- Kensington mine and Tulsequah Chief mine.
- Proposed second channel crossing.
- Juneau Airport runway expansion.
- Proposed tree removal between dike trail and expanded float plane pond.
- Solid waste management at Juneau landfill.
- Development of the North Douglas golf course - (chemicals and wetlands fill).
- Effects of motorized craft on wildlife and water quality of Auke Lake.
- Recycling in Juneau.
- Effects of commercial jet boat tours on salmon spawning habitat in the Chilkat River.
- Proposal to run sled-dog tours on private land in Sheep Creek Valley.
- Proposals to transfer lands important to public recreation into private ownership.
- Proposals to restrict dogs on selected hiking trails in Juneau.
- Proposals to place fill on wetlands.
- Proposals for all manner of eco-tourism ideas, from zip lines, to wildlife viewing.
- Hardening and widening trails, and whether commercial interests can or can't use them.
- Proposals to open areas currently closed to hunting, at the expense of wildlife viewing.

This isn't an exhaustive list, but I'm sure it touches on issues that are near and dear to one or more of our members hearts and we encourage you to work on your issues individually. However, we as a board cannot do everything, nor should we try. The board tries to make decisions strategically. And you, as members, should be able to weigh in on how the board chooses. To that end, I'll try to capture the board's general train of thinking as we evaluate the smorgasbord of conservation issues presented each year.

If it's an issue involving National Interest Lands, we tend to defer to our State Audubon office in Anchorage, and to other statewide and National environmental groups to lead the effort. So you won't see Juneau Audubon putting a lot of resources into The Arctic Refuge, or Northeast NPRA (National petroleum reserve). Certainly these are critically important issues, but we let others carry the water on these.

In the case of large Southeast-wide issues within the northern panhandle, like the Juneau Access road, fast ferries, and the Kensington mine, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) takes the lead. Juneau Audubon is a member of SEACC, and we almost always support SEACC's position on these issues, but typically not with active, independent work by our own board.

We tend to favor issues where our membership has expertise or logical interest. Protection of birds and critical wetland habitats are good examples of where we do want to be involved. So issues like the second channel crossing, airport expansion into the Mendenhall Wetlands are likely to rise nearer the top. We're less likely to get involved in allocation issues between wildlife hunters and viewers, or effects of very rapid tourism growth on downtown traffic and congestion.

We tend to favor bigger local issues, including those in all Southeast communities, where a high percentage of our membership has a stake. For that reason, we're more likely to address a large golf course proposal, rather than a fill permit associate with an individual homeowner's remodel project. The small projects are important in total, but they could overwhelm our capacity to respond effectively.

As we roll into 2007, I'd like to invite you to weigh in on the issues you think Juneau Audubon should be involved in. I'd also like to invite any members from all over Southeast, with an interest in helping with conservation work, to contact me conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org or 586-5816. We'd love to have you involved.

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 _____
City/State/Zip Code _____
Telephone number _____

____ My check for \$ _____ is enclosed _____ Please bill me
A51 **7XCH**

**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 _____**

Officers, Committee Chairs, Events Coordinators

President: Jeff Sauer, president@juneau-audubon-society.org
Vice-President: Mark Schwan, vice-president@juneau-audubon-society.org
Secretary: Patty Rose, secretary@juneau-audubon-society.org
Treasurer: Liz Blecker, 586-4210, treasurer@juneau-audubon-society.org
Programs: Brenda Wright, 789-4656, programs@juneau-audubon-society.org
Membership: Donna Carroll, membership@juneau-audubon-society.org
Education: Beth Peluso, education@juneau-audubon-society.org
Publicity: Amy Skilbred, publicity@juneau-audubon-society.org
Conservation: Matt Kirchoff, conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org
Field Trips: Steve Zimmerman, 586-2597, field-trips@juneau-audubon-society.org
Raven Editor: Mary Lou King, 789-7540, raven@juneau-audubon-society.org
Public Market Ellen Anderson, 789-1412, public-market@juneau-audubon-society.org
Web Master: George Utermohle, webmaster@juneau-audubon-society.org

JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY
PO BOX 021725
JUNEAU, AK 99802

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage Paid
Permit No. 153
Juneau, AK 99802