

# 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 35, Number 1

Juneau Audubon Society

September 2008

## **JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY WILL HOLD THE FIRST FALL SEASON GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9**

**\*\*\*Please consider getting *The Raven* by e-mail instead of snail mail to save paper, time, money and view photos in color. To choose this option, send an email to: [membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:membership@juneau-audubon-society.org)**

**Election!** Juneau Audubon Society will elect officers in conjunction with the public meeting in October. Our officers serve a term of one year; so all officers need to be elected each year. Nominations from the floor at the annual meeting are accepted for all positions.

The election slate for 2008 is Mark Schwan for president, Jeff Sauer for vice-president, Brien Daugherty for treasurer and Patty Rose for secretary. Please contact any of the officers or board members if you would like to be on the ballot as an officer, or are willing to volunteer for any of our standing committees. Our standing committees include membership, program, field trip, education, conservation, and newsletter.

## **SUMMER ADVENTURES AND ACTIVITIES**

**MARK SCHWAN AND PAUL SUCHANEK'S TRIP TO PELICAN ON THE FERRY** By Paul-- 8/05/08. Mark and I saw lots of humpback whales, a Minke Whale **Parasitic** and **Pomarine Jaegers, Red-necked Phalaropes** (several thousand), some **Ancient Murrelets**, 2 orcas, and a **Parakeet Auklet**.

### **SATURDAY WILD ON GOLD RIDGE** By Mary Willson

When I got up that morning, the rain was pelting down and the wind-whipped trees were losing leaves and twigs. The two-day storm had dumped so much rain that all the streams were 'on a tear.' Some trails had become temporary streams and the mountainsides were laced with waterfalls.

This was the day, however, on which the Juneau Audubon Society's 'Saturday Wild' hike was scheduled to go to Gold Ridge. The tram was running, although each car had

two heavy barrels of sand strapped in place to help reduce rocking and swaying in the gusting winds.

Despite the decidedly snarky weather, over 20 people eventually gathered at the top of the tram and set off up the trail. The group was led by naturalist/photographer Bob Armstrong, with four or five assistant naturalists along to help. So up we went. The top of the ridge was shrouded in cloud, so we stopped short of the last steep slopes.

We paused frequently to look at flowers. The miserable weather meant that birds were few and far between: I saw ONE robin and heard ONE fox sparrow. And sensible marmots stayed in their burrows. There were old deer tracks but no deer; winter ptarmigan beds but no ptarmigan. The flowers, however, put on a tremendous show.

Altogether, I counted 35 species of wildflower plus five flowering shrubs, and I probably missed a few! The prostrate willows were done flowering and were maturing seeds, so they didn't make the list (but they did often have lumpy, red galls on their leaves). This count doesn't include the wind-pollinated grasses, sedges, and rushes that are up there but don't make showy, insect-pollinated flowers. This was enough to cheer us all on a dismal day!

One of my favorites in this floral array is the very uncommon frog orchid. This diminutive plant bears several green flowers on its stem, and the flowers were just starting to open. Supposedly, the flower somewhat resembles a frog, but the alleged similarity eludes me. It is found in much of North America, but in Juneau has (so far) been reported only from the Gold Ridge area. I'd love to know what insect pollinates this flower; I'm guessing it is small flies.

My other favorite on this walk is the inky or glaucous gentian. Another small plant, it bears several unusual-colored flowers of a deep, intense greenish blue. It is found from northern Southeast to eastern Siberia in alpine areas. The flowers seemed to be firmly closed, perhaps waiting for a sunnier, warmer day when the bees would be flying.

About midday, we headed down, as the sky lightened up a bit and the wind abated. By the time I got home, the sun was shining through temporary gaps in the clouds. The storm was finally over, but the matted-down plants and raging torrents would take a while to recover. The people, on the other hand, recovered quickly with hot tea and crumpets.

### **JUNEAU SUMMER SEASON BIRD OBSERVATIONS** By Mark Schwan June 1 through August 20,, 2008

Although this summer did not quite compare to last year for the number of rarities found, there were still many interesting bird observations over the course of the summer. So, here goes. There were a couple of very late local observations of **Snow Goose**, with at least 12 photographed at the Mendenhall Wetlands on June 6 (fide GV from BB) and 10 seen at the mouth of Eagle River on June 9 (PS, MS). Eight **Brant** were found at the mouth of Lawson Creek on Douglas Island on June 22

(PR). Although our most common species of goose seen in Juneau, a brood of five young Canada Geese on a beaver pond at Point Bridget State Park on June 16, was a rare breeding record for the Juneau road system (PS, MS). One, male **Cinnamon Teal** was present at the Mendenhall Wetlands on June 12 (PS, MS). An eclipsed male **Redhead** was seen at Pioneer Marsh on Jul 17, (PR) and again on July 24 (MS). This species is very rare in Juneau at this time.

A breeding plumaged **Yellow-billed Loon**, seen on July 8 near Lena Point was a surprise, as they are quite rare around Juneau at this time (JS). Always exciting to see, a **Peregrine Falcon** was spotted along the Airport Dike Trail on August 12 (PR). One or two **Soras** were heard or seen at Pioneer Marsh during June by various birders. This species seems to have become an annual bird now in Juneau. There were several reports of **Hudsonian Godwits** during late July, but 51 adults seen at the Mendenhall Wetlands on July 28 was impressive (PS). Birders have come to anticipate, and expect the appearance of **Stilt Sandpipers** around mid August, so two juveniles found at the wetlands on August 18 (GV, MM) was not too surprising, but still a treat for local birders. The next day, the number had increased to eight birds (PS,PR,RG). Rarer yet, however, were two other species of shorebirds found on the wetlands. A single **Upland Sandpiper** was also at the wetlands on August 18 (GV, MM), and the next day, August 19, a striking juvenile Ruff was located (PR).

Other noteworthy shorebirds during the summer period included two species of phalarope. There were several observations of the rarer species, **Wilson's Phalarope**, including three (two females and one male) found on June 16 at the Mendenhall Wetlands (GV, MM,) and one on August 11 and 12, also along the Airport Dike trail (PR). This last individual was in juvenal plumage, a life stage rarely ever noted in Juneau-occurring birds. **Red-necked Phalaropes** although somewhat common on local marine waters during migration, are rarely seen in roadside shoreline and intertidal areas, so one found on August 15 and 16 adjacent to the Airport Dike Trail was worth noting. This bird was in juvenal plumage and had one deformed leg (PR).

Perhaps the most intriguing gull observation in Juneau this summer was a probable 1<sup>st</sup> cycle "**Kamchatka**" gull observed on the Mendenhall Wetlands on July 22 and July 31 (and subsequently, August 2) (PS). This subspecies of Mew Gull occurs in Asia and is a casual to rare visitor to western Alaska. This is the first record for Juneau and probably all of Southeast Alaska. Paul wrote detailed notes and got several photographs for comparison to our locally common Mew Gull.

The only reports of **Ring-billed Gull** were a single, near adult bird observed on July 31 on Mendenhall Wetlands (PS). and two adults at Fish Creek on August 19 (PS). A very exciting find was a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** at Eagle Beach on August 10 Eagle Beach (PS,GB). This northern nesting species is highly pelagic in migration and rarely seen in Juneau. There were small numbers of **Caspian Terns** throughout the period at Eagle Beach and the Mendenhall Wetlands (various observers) with a peak of 14 at Mendenhall Wetlands on July 22 (PS). Two color-banded birds were observed. One bird observed at Eagle Beach on June 26 was banded as a chick at East Sand Island in the Columbia River estuary on July 6, 2004, and the other observed at Mendenhall Wetlands on July/22 was probably banded as a chick at East Sand Island in the Columbia River estuary on July 12, 2005 (PS).

Quite the find indeed, a juvenile **Common Nighthawk**, was flushed while roosting on a rock near the 3000-foot level of Gastineau Peak on August 20 (PS). A yellow-shafted form of **Northern**

**Flicker** was present on the Airport Dike Trail on August 13 (PR). There were multiple June sightings of **Cedar Waxwings**, with one in town on June 10 (PR), 17 at Brotherhood Park on June 18 (PR,MS), five at Pioneer Marsh on June 20 (PS), and eight at Bartlett Hospital on June 23 (DR). **European Starlings** have become very scarce in Juneau in recent years, which nobody is really crying over, but 17 birds, 13 of which were young, seen near the Juneau golf course on July 14 might be worth noting (MS). One singing male **Cassin's Vireo** was located at Moose Lake at the Mendenhall Forelands on June 14 (PS, BA, MA).

This was a banner year for **Tennessee Warbler**. The first report was of a singing male observed on June 12 in the Mendenhall Valley (PS). One was heard in the glacier forelands on June 16 (BP) and up to four birds were heard at various Mendenhall Glacier Forelands sites on June 17 (PS, MS). Two birds were heard again in this same area on June 25 (PS). Then in late July (20<sup>th</sup>), a single bird was seen and photographed on Douglas Island (PR). A singing male **Magnolia Warbler** was found on June 18 near Sandy Beach, at the same location as the bird found in 2007 (PS, PR). This species is quite rare in Juneau. Also quite rare, two **Blackpoll Warbler** observations in mid June were intriguing, and a nice surprise: One bird was heard in the glacier forelands area on June 16 (BP) and the other was heard and seen near Wren Drive in the Mendenhall Valley on June 17 (PS, MS).

One juvenile **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was seen at Point Bridget State Park on July 30, which was quite an early date (PS). A male **Black-headed Grosbeak** was discovered on June 1, when it briefly

visited a Thane Road feeder (RA, PS, BA). Only Juneau's second record, a female **Lazuli Bunting**: was photographed along the airport dike on June 21 (PR). There was a subsequent report of possibly the same bird in practically the same location, on July 17 (RG). Finally, a flock of **24 Red-winged Blackbirds** at the Mendenhall Wetlands on July 28 was noteworthy (PS). Thanks to those that contributed information.

Contributors: Photos by Patty Rose (PR); Bev Agler (BA); Mark Anderson (MA); Robert Armstrong (RA); Blake Barbaree (BB); Rich Gordon (RG); Molly McCafferty (MM); Beth Peluso (BP); Deborah Rudis (DR); Jeff Sauer (JS); Mark Schwan (MS); Paul Suchanek (PS); Gus van Vliet (GV). Compiled by Mark Schwan

### **WRANGELL SUMMER 2008 BIRD REPORT** By Bonnie Demerjian

This has been a most uneventful summer. Hope the fall improves.

Large numbers of cedar waxwings and pine siskins were around town all of June and July. We usually don't see these waxwings until summer's end.

Melissa Cady and Paula Rak reported seeing a three-toed woodpecker's nest with young in it near Frosty Bay on the Cleveland Peninsula on June 17. They were doing a breeding bird survey at the time. They also saw and photographed a sandhill crane chick on the nest that day.

A pair of Red-winged blackbirds nested again this year at Pat's Lake. Alder flycatchers were seen more frequently this summer than in past years.

On June 20 John Martin reported a black-headed grosbeak at his feeder at 10 Mile. He said while reporting that bird that he had seen 5 band-tailed pigeons at his feeder on May 25. On June 23 Susan Wise Eagle photographed a female black-headed grosbeak at their feeder at 10 Mile.

On July 3 Carol Ross reported seeing a Caspian's tern at Two-Tree Pass, about 5 miles west of Wrangell. She did not take a usable photo but says she saw the black tip on its beak.

The last major birding event for Haines finished just after the deadline for the final newsletter in

### **HAINES BIRD OBSERVATIONS** By Georgia Giacobbe

May. The Haines Birdathon organized by Pam Randles was a success with 72 species counted. The following birds were noted as regular migrants that passed through: Snow Geese, Canada Goose, American Wigeon, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-Winged Teal, Ring-Necked Duck, Redhead, and Hooded Merganser. Of special interest was a flock of 6 Great Blue Herons. Also, later in May of interest, about 2000 Surf Scoters rafted up and down Portage Cove and Lutak Inlet. Sometimes White Winged Scoters, Barrow's Goldeneyes or Harlequins fed with them. They were in rafts in the hundreds, sometimes a thousand.

More into mid summer around the fourth of July, 6 Pacific Loons calling and feeding in Lutak Inlet. Juvenile Rufous Hummingbirds and Chestnut Backed Chickadees at feeders. There seemed to be high numbers of juveniles for some species this year – Robins, Varied Thrushes, Steller's Jays, Pine Siskins, Red-Breasted Sapsuckers, Crows, Ravens, Wilson's Warblers, Orange-crowned Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes. Chickadee, Hummingbirds, and Bald Eagle juvenile numbers seem normal.

As late as July 31, along the Chilkoot River: Young eagles were getting flight feathers and practicing flying. Crows still had young. Cliff swallows, and Bonaparte's Gull juveniles spotted, Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Warblers with young, Orange-crowned Warblers. Merganser females mostly without young. Only one brood seen. Belted Kingfishers and Rufous Hummingbirds seen. And alas, we were still not able to confirm the Pileated Woodpeckers reported earlier. They still remain as elusive as always, mostly heard, but not seen.

#### **Gulls & Shorebirds** Posted in Eaglechat by: "Paul Suchanek"

**Tue Aug 19, 2008 9:12 pm (PDT)**

This PM, there were at least 2 **Ring-billed Gulls** and one immature **Glaucous Gull** in the gull hordes near the dock at Taku Fisheries downtown.

Also some great shorebirds have been showing up on the wetlands (not originally found by me) including up to 8 **Stilt Sandpipers**, a fly by **Upland Sandpiper**, and best of all, a juvenile **Ruff** found today by Patty Rose. The Ruff was in the slough outside the dike which eventually connects to the gazebo pond.

**NEWS FROM AUDUBON ALASKA IN ANCHORAGE** By Taldi Walter  
Communications & Education Specialist

Is it any surprise that Alaska has more globally significant bird habitats than any other state in the union? Over the last seven years, Audubon Alaska has combed Alaska for areas essential to the survival of bird populations. There are currently 145 sites statewide that are officially identified as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The majority of them are also recognized as globally or continentally significant. In fact, Alaska has almost half of all globally significant IBAs identified in the United States.

The number of globally significant IBAs identified in Alaska should come as no surprise when one considers the diversity and quality of habitat found in this 365 million acre state. Alaska has more than 47,000 miles of marine shoreline, 100,000 glaciers, more than 3 million lakes and rivers, and a diversity of habitats that range from temperate rainforest to Arctic tundra. Alaska's IBAs include coastal nesting grounds for about 90% of the world population of Emperor Geese, staging areas for tens of thousands of Bar-tailed Godwits, the ice-bound, at-sea wintering area for many of the world's Spectacled Eiders, and nesting sites for a variety of endemic species.

With hopes of increasing awareness and understanding of Alaska's IBAs, Audubon Alaska recently released a poster-sized map that highlights the 145 identified sites, plus a handful of potential sites that are likely to meet listing criteria in the near future. Not only is the IBA map informative, but original artwork by David Allen Sibley makes it a striking piece. Sibley's illustrations include the Spectacled Eider and Marbled Murrelet, both species of global conservation concern. Audubon Alaska hopes to continue to add new IBAs to the list, but focusing on protection and management of existing IBAs is a priority for Audubon Alaska.

To get a copy of Alaska's IBA map please visit the Audubon Alaska website:  
[http://www.audubonalaska.org/BirdSci\\_IBAs.html](http://www.audubonalaska.org/BirdSci_IBAs.html) or call the office (907) 276-7034.

**SURVEYING SEABIRDS IN THE BERING SEA** By Paul Suchanek

Dave Porter from Trapper Creek and I spent about 2 weeks in July conducting seabird surveys in the eastern Bering Sea for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as a volunteer on the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker Healy. The primary mission of this cruise was a scientific study of summer conditions in the Bering Sea in relationship to the extent of ice in the winter. Understanding the productivity base of the food chain that supports the enormous fish, marine mammal, and seabird populations of the Bering Sea is the ultimate

goal of these studies. While scientists near the stern were using sophisticated sampling gear to study nearly every aspect of the water column, we counted seabirds from the bridge along a 300 meter wide transect using simply binoculars and a laptop connected to the ship's GPS (Global Positioning System) to record our sightings. Given that the Healy is a very stable 420 feet in length and the bridge is 66 feet about the sea, we had a grand perch from which to look down among the waves for birds and marine mammals.

After boarding the ship in Dutch Harbor, we cruised out on the afternoon of the next day and immediately encountered huge flocks of Northern Fulmars and Short-tailed Shearwaters. We saw more birds on our first transect this day than we would for the rest of the trip as the waters around Akutan and Unimak Pass are obviously extremely productive. We also saw our first Black-footed and Laysan Albatross; later we would see several Short-tailed Albatross, an endangered species with a total population of only about 2,000, and a life bird for both of us. After heading to the east side of Unimak Pass, we then headed northwest to deep water west of the Pribilof Islands where we sighted more albatross as well as lots of Fork-tailed Storm Petrels, Northern Fulmars, and Red-legged Kittiwakes.

Eventually we headed east and north to shallow waters in the area of St. Matthew and Nunivak Island where bird diversity and density were both quite low. We spent about 5 days primarily counting Common and Thick-billed Murres. After again heading south and west to deep water near the Pribilofs, we got some great views of a pod of fin whales. After our two weeks of surveys, we were then ferried by inflatable to the town of St. Paul in the Pribilofs and two seabird observers replaced us on the ship. As we had some time before our flight on the following day, we got to see one of the fur seal rookeries as well as a bit of the seabird colonies. Two weeks of staring into the waves and fog of the Bering Sea looking for seabirds is definitely not for everyone but it was certainly an interesting experience.

#### **FROM AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY**

It has been estimated that 975 million migratory birds are killed every year in the United States by flying into plate glass windows. Birds cannot perceive transparent or reflective glass as a barrier to be avoided. The hazard to birds is greatly increased when habitat is reflected by large panes of glass, or when transparent glass allows views of habitat on the other side of a building or views of plants inside the building. Bird collision with glass is an issue that can be addressed at many buildings, especially buildings that serve as Nature Centers, Wildlife Refuge Visitor Centers, and at educational facilities. These facilities can help educate the public about the magnitude of unnecessary bird deaths due to collisions with windows through demonstrating ways to reduce this threat at their own buildings.

Please help American Bird Conservancy make windows and buildings more bird-friendly by doing the following:

- Use a technique of 1. Placing taut netting over exterior windows so that if birds hit, they bounce off like a trampoline. 2. Using window film on the outside of

windows that makes glass appear opaque from the exterior, but remains transparent from the interior. It can be left plain, cut into strips and installed as a striped pattern, or pre-printed to incorporate a pattern or logo. 3. Interrupting reflections with a dense pattern applied with paint or decals on the outside of the window.

- Pass out the window handout (created with a space for your organizations name and contact information)
- Involve the community in the solutions of the problem through a community day or other planned activity at your location.

Detailed information (a supply list, pictures of window applications and the window handout) have been placed in the BCA member website section in the Bird Conservation Issues and Resources section. Please let me know if you have trouble accessing the documents in the member section. For more information about the ABC Bird Collisions Campaign, please contact: Karen Imparato Cotton, Bird Collisions Campaign Manager American Bird Conservancy 1731 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009, Tel: 202-234-7181 X 202: [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)

#### **Juneau Audubon Society Officers, Committee Chairs, Events Coordinators**

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

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

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

**Treasurer:** Matt Kirchhoff, [treasurer@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:treasurer@juneau-audubon-society.org)

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

**Membership:** Brien Daugherty, [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)

**Conservation:** Meg Cartwright, 364-2258 [conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Field Trips:** Anastasia Lynch, [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 Utermohl, [webmaster@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:webmaster@juneau-audubon-society.org)

#### **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**

---

#### **Local Audubon Society Membership Application**

If you prefer to support Juneau Audubon Society only, please complete the form above and send \$10 (1-year membership) to: Juneau Audubon Society, Membership Chair, PO Box 21725, Juneau, AK 99802. You will receive the Juneau Chapter news letter *The Raven*.

\*\*\*Please consider getting *The Raven* by e-mail instead of snail mail to save paper, time, money and view **photos in color**. To choose this option, write your email address here \_\_\_\_\_.