Upcoming Audubon spring bird walks 2010

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<td>May 8</td>
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<td>Paul Suchanek</td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>Mendenhall Wetlands</td>
<td>Kevin O’Malley</td>
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<td>May 22</td>
<td>Sandy Beach</td>
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<td>May 29</td>
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<td>June 5</td>
<td>Moose Lake</td>
<td>Deanna MacPhail</td>
<td>7:30am to 9:30am</td>
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**May 8, Mouth of the Mendenhall River, 8am to 10am or ?** Paul Suchanek will take people out on the wetland flats to the water’s edge at the mouth of the Mendenhall. This should be a perfect time to catch the shorebird migration in full swing. There will be a relatively small high tide at about 10am, so there will not be any marathon walk to the channel and the water will hopefully push birds our way. There should be several spotting scopes available for close up views. Proper footwear is essential. We say this walk is scheduled for two hours, but if the birds are near peak abundance, many stay longer to enjoy the spectacle. Meet at the parking area near the end of Radcliffe Road.

**May 15, Mendenhall Wetlands again, 8am to 10am.** Kevin O’Malley will lead this walk along the dike trail, and perhaps out into the flats as well. Novice and veteran birders should enjoy this outing as it is a great time to be out on the wetlands. Wear appropriate footwear and meet at the end of Radcliffe Road.

**May 22, Sandy Beach, Douglas, 7:30am to 9:30am.** Gwen Baluss will lead an exploration of the lush deciduous stands bordering the Gastineau channel. These woods have traditionally been a good place to see migratory songbirds such as Pacific-slope flycatcher and Townsend’s warbler as they first arrive in the Juneau area. It is also a ripe place to look for rarities. The wide trails offer fairly easy terrain for birders of all ages. Meet at the picnic area by the Sandy beach parking lot.

**May 29, Pioneers’ Marsh, 10am to noon.** Kevin O’Malley and Laurie Lamm will lead this outing and is aimed for young birders and families with an interest in learning about birds but who have little or no prior experience. The marsh is a perfect place to hold such an event as the access is very easy, requires no hiking to get to the site, and generally has a very nice mix of birds in easy view. Kevin and Laurie will provide binoculars and a scope will also be available. This viewing area is directly behind the...
Pioneers’ Home and parking is limited, so please meet at the Western Auto parking lot and then the
group can car pool over to the marsh.

_**June 5, Moose Lake, 7:30am to 9:30am.**_ (please note time change from schedule in last month’s
newsletter). Deanna MacPhail will lead this walk into one of our most interesting birding areas in
Juneau. The dense deciduous vegetation and abundant water provides habitat for species hard to find
elsewhere in our local rainforest. Target birds for this outing include Warbling Vireo, American
Redstart, and Northern Waterthrush, but the area sometimes offers up other surprises, such as Tennessee
Warbler and Cassin’s Vireo. This is a wonderful place to finish off our spring bird walks. Meet at the
parking area, next to the Mendenhall River bridge on the Back Loop Road.

**Forest Service to give public up-close look at songbirds**

_Juneau, AK—_ In celebration of
International Migratory Bird Day,
the Juneau Ranger District invites
the public to a live bird banding
demonstration **Saturday, May 8,** at
the Juneau Community Garden large
pavilion.

U.S. Forest Service Wildlife
Technician Gwen Baluss will give
attendees an up-close look at how
scientists study migratory birds.
Songbirds will be captured in nets,
fitted with light-weight tags and
safely released.

All ages are welcome.
Activities will be on-going between
8 a.m and 12 p.m.

Bicycling and car-pooling are encouraged due to limited parking.

For more information or directions, contact Gwen Baluss at gbaluss@fs.fed.us
or call 586-8800.

**SATURDAY WILD SUMMER SCHEDULE**

_Saturday, June 19, 10:00 am Jensen Arboretum:_ Come to the Jensen-Olson Arboretum for
Audubon’s Saturday Wild. See the interface of the cultivated gardens with the natural forest and rocky
beach of Pearl Harbor. Arboretum Manager will give a tour of the grounds as well as lead a short hike
on the new Point Caroline trail to view native plants of the forest understory.
**Driving Directions:** The Jensen-Olson Arboretum is located 23 miles north of downtown Juneau. In an area known locally as “Out the Road,” the Arboretum is just past Mile 23 on Glacier Highway.

From downtown Juneau, take the Egan Expressway northwest toward the Juneau Airport. The divided four lane Expressway eventually becomes a two lane road at Brotherhood Bridge and changes name to Glacier Highway. Continue driving west past Auke Lake and Auke Bay on Glacier Highway which will bend to the north. Watch for the square green mile markers on the shoulder of the road. Just after Mile 22, you will pass the Shrine of St. Therese. Continue seven-tenths of a mile, passing Mile 23 and look for the Arboretum sign. Turn left and follow the short lane to the small parking area.

**Saturday, July 10 – Mount Roberts – Details to be Announced**

**Saturday, August 7, 10 am – Outer Point Trail --** Chiska Derr will lead a Lichens walk

**Saturday, Early September – Eaglecrest –** Wild Berry walk with details to be announced

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**Southeast Alaska Bioblitz 2010 -- June 26 and 27, Douglas Island**

Ever wondered what your list would look like if you were to find a local natural area and count every single species that you found living there?

That’s what the organizers of the Southeast Alaska Bioblitz are trying to find out. And they have assembled a team of scientists to help.

A “Bioblitz” is described by National Geographic as “a 24-hour event in which teams of volunteer scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members work together to find and identify as many species of plants, animals, microbes, fungi, and other organisms as possible”. The count occurs in a designated area and serves as an index of local biodiversity.

The clock starts ticking for Juneau at noon on Saturday June 26. Eaglecrest ski area will serve as the headquarters. Naturalists are invited to lend their expertise. Everyone is invited to participate.

Fun and food will accompany the data-taking and scientific exhibits.

A number of Audubon members plan to join the effort. Paul Suchanek will lead the bird counts. Gwen Baluss will demonstrate bird banding at Eaglecrest from 8-10 a.m on Sunday. For further information, and a schedule, see Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s website for the event:


You may also call Kristen Romanoff at ADF&G 465-4292
Announcing Audubon Alaska’s New Executive Director!

From Audubon Alaska’s e-news: It’s the news you’ve been waiting to hear! I am so excited to introduce you to Audubon Alaska’s new Executive Director, Dr. Nils Warnock.

Nils has a PhD in Ecology from the University of California at Davis and San Diego State University. He is currently a Wildlife Specialist for the Oiled Wildlife Care Network at UC Davis, a Research Associate with Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) Conservation Science, and an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Wildlife at Humboldt State University. Prior to his work at UC Davis, Nils was the Co-Director of the Wetlands Ecology Division at PRBO for nine years, where he managed a staff and budget similar to Audubon Alaska’s. He has published extensively on the ecology of shorebirds, including more than 50 scientific articles in peer-reviewed books and journals, as well as articles in popular magazines such as Natural History and Birding.

Nils has considerable experience in Alaska and has conducted research on shorebirds and other birds like the Spectacled Eider at various locations in the state, including the North Slope, Seward Peninsula, Yukon-Kuskokwim (YK) Delta, and Copper River Delta. Nils recently worked with colleagues from the US Geological Survey and US Fish and Wildlife Service to use satellite telemetry tags to track migration of Bar-tailed Godwits and Bristle-thighed Curlews from breeding grounds in Alaska to sites as far away as New Zealand. These flights are non-stop for distances up to 6,000 miles! Nils says this research made him appreciate the importance of food-rich coastal habitats like the YK Delta. In his own words: “I see the Audubon Alaska job not only as an exciting opportunity for me, but also a tremendous opportunity to help guide and facilitate conservation action on issues that are dear to my heart, such as the protection of critical staging habitat for migrating birds.”

Nils will officially start with Audubon on June 14. His wife, Sarah, a scientist and teacher, and his two children, Noah and Anna, will join Nils in Anchorage in July. But you can meet him sooner than that! Nils is the keynote speaker for this year’s Copper River Shorebird Festival in Cordova. You can catch his talk on Friday, May 7 at 7:30 p.m. in the Cordova High School Gym, where he’ll be discussing Wings over Borders—The Amazing Migration of Shorebirds. And stay tuned for a welcome party for Nils in Anchorage in the coming months.

Results of Saturday (4/17) Audubon Bird Walk at Fish Creek

Posted on Eaglechat by: "Paul Suchanek" paulms@gci.net  paulms99824

There was a good showing of birds and birders this morning at Fish Creek. As the birders gathered, at least 2 or 3 Red-breasted Sapsuckers entertained everyone as they landed on power poles and took turns pounding on the Fish Creek sign. Down the trail about 100 yards, numerous Ruby-crowned Kinglets flitted about and a small flock of Golden-crowned and Fox Sparrows moved through the brush. Lots of American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, and Mallards were then found on the edge of the bay. After viewing more waterfowl including some Northern Pintails at the mouth of Fish Creek, the biggest surprise of the morning was just around the corner
as Mark Schwan spotted a **Yellow-billed Loon** near a log high on the beach at the high tide line. Since it was obviously stranded and probably either sick or injured, the bird was later captured (very easily) and then picked up by the Juneau Raptor Center - probably for shipment to Sitka or Anchorage. The rain began to fall as the group moved past the loon and scoped another group of waterfowl at the edge of the bay. A male **Eurasian (common) Green-winged Teal** and a male **Eurasian Wigeon** were found in this group, but unfortunately, distance and the rain didn't make for great views. The Eurasian teal is considered a subspecies of green-winged teal by the American Ornithologist's Union but is split from American green-winged teal by European authorities. This subspecies is very rare in the Juneau area. An early pair of northern shovelers were also spotted in the mix of waterfowl. All in all, a very interesting morning.

**Juneau Audubon's Berners Bay cruise April 24**

*Posted on Eaglechat by: "Mark Schwan" aukebay@gci.net markamb2001*

The Juneau Audubon cruise with Allen Marine to Berners Bay was memorable to say the least. As we headed out of Auke Bay and up Favorite Channel, we had no idea we all would witness something most of us had never seen. The birding along the way toward the bay was uneventful, but, we did see perhaps three humpbacks and made a brief stop to view Steller sea lions at Benjamin Island. As we headed into Berners Bay, the area seemed quiet at the south end with no large scoter flocks present, although soon we could see there were considerable numbers of gulls over toward the mouth of Cowee Creek. We headed up into the bay and slowly moved through Slate Cove, with still an unimpressive number of birds to see, and no real showing yet of marine mammals. There were murrelets, mergansers, guillemots, a few loons, plus some harbor seals.

We swung right to enter the main part of the north bay. We could see large numbers of gulls on the north shore. It was at that point people started noticing considerable splashing off toward the inner, eastern shore. I assumed it was from humpbacks, but as we approached it became clear killer whales were causing all the ruckus. There were several humpbacks in the vicinity as well. There were a couple of private parties in boats watching and taking pictures. As the captain slowed and idled off at an appropriate distance, we watched. What unfolded was pretty amazing to see, but rather eerie as well. What we were witnessing was a pod of transient killer whales, doing what they do, i.e. killing a Steller sea lion, a very large Steller sea lion. Moreover, based on what the naturalist on board told Mary Willson, we were watching a training session, where the moms were teaching the young how to kill. There was a large male, or perhaps two large males (not sure about that) in the group, but the male, or males, were not involved in the kill and were cruising around in the periphery.

What we saw was a group of perhaps two females and three or four young ??? surrounding the sea lion, and continually "tail" slapping it, head butting it, leaping on it, from different sides. This went on for quite some time,
and I suppose had been going on for a much longer time if that is what was going on when we initially saw the distant spashing. Eventually, things at the surface quieted, and it appeared to be over, but what apparently was happening was the orcas were finally going in for the kill underwater. After some time, a large number of gulls (glaucous-winged, mew, herring, Bonaparte’s, some possible hybrid types) came to the site and began feeding at the surface, apparently to take remains of the sea lion that came to the surface.

Not long after the kill, the male orca breached near our boat, which it then did a couple of more times. At this point, several of the killer whales were in very close proximity to humpbacks, and there we also saw several common loons, and a yellow-billed loon, and the gull activity continued. It was quite the scene. The Allen Marine naturalist was extremely helpful and knowledgable, and she let us all know how rare it was to see what we saw. She also said that transient male killer whales generally only breach after a kill.

I did a little research on the internet this morning, and found that what we saw was typical, that is, the orcas will generally harrass, tire, and wound, and injure their prey in ways that minimize the risk of them being injured. So, they will do the head butting, “tail” slapping, and landing on top of their prey. Then, finally, they force it underwater where they finish the kill and begin to feed. Whew! To think we were watching the mothers teaching the young these techniques was incredible.

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**Juneau Birding Notes for April, 2010**

April is one of those months local birders look to with great anticipation, for this is when spring migration goes into high gear and the numbers of species and birds explodes. Early on, waterfowl take center stage, and everyone wonders when the first male Rufous Hummingbirds will arrive, and we beginning listening for our earliest songsters. A little after mid-month we get serious about looking for shorebirds, swallows, warblers and sparrows. Things, for the most part have been pretty much on schedule. Here are some of the highlights, and again, most of these sightings came from our most active, dedicated birders.

Two **Brant** were found at Point Bridget State Park (PBSP) on 4/14 (PS). Up to four **Eurasian Wigeon** were present during the month, with one or two birds seen at Fish Creek, Salmon Creek, and Eagle Beach on different occasions (many obs). A beautiful male **Cinnamon Teal** was early, and cooperative, as it lounged most of a day in a slough adjacent to the airport dike trail, attracting many photographers (GV). Six **Redheads** on Auke Lake (4/29, NH) was a very nice catch, for although it is an annual bird here it is very rare to see more than about three at one time. Probably the most unexpected report was the **White-tailed Ptarmigan** seen in the upper meadow reach of PBSP on 4/25 (PS).

Even rarer in spring than fall, two **Rough-legged Hawks**, spotted on the wetlands near the golf course on 4/28 (MA, SZ) was a nice surprise. One of these birds, a striking light-phase bird, was seen through the day and on the morning (4/29, PR). The only **Peregrine Falcon** report came from Eagle Reef on 4/4 (MJ). The **American Coot** seen the previous month (assumed to be the same bird) was still present near
the Macaulay (DIPAC) Hatchery early in the month (4/6, NH; 4/7, NH, MS). An Iceland Gull was seen amongst the gull masses at PBSP on 4/25 (PS), Paul also located our old friend, the Lesser Black-backed Gull, off the mouth of Fish Creek on 4/19. This bird has been reappearing each spring since 1993. Our first Caspian Terns were found near the airport dike (1, PS) and off the mouth of the Mendenhall River (2, MS).

A Northern Hawk Owl was keeping the skiers company up at Eaglecrest on 4/25 (GB). Northern Flicker reports came from Montana Creek (4/22, LE), Auke Bay (4/26, MS) and PBSP on 4/27 (PS). A lone Cliff Swallow was tagging along with a nice flock of Tree and Violet-green Swallows near the golf course on 4/28 (PS, MS). Last year, hardly anyone had a look at a Mountain Bluebird, but this April, they made a very nice showing out near the Scout Camp (2 on 4/11, GV), and one to two birds found near the golf course and along the airport dike trail on numerous dates (many obs.). The only Townsend's Solitaire (a very tough bird to find here) came from the end of the road on North Douglas on 4/23 (PS). Three Snow Buntings were seen along the airport dike on 4/4 (NH, BUK). That's it for now. Let's hope the rest of spring and summer months bring many interesting birds. Have a safe and exciting summer everyone, and happy birding!

Contributors: Mark Anderson, Larry Edfelt, MA; Nick Hajdukovich, NH; Merrill Jensen, MJ; Patty Rose, PR; Paul Suchanek, PS; Mark Schwan, MS; Brian Uher-Koch, BUK; Gus van Vliet, GV.

Compiled by Mark Schwan

SPRING BIRDING NEWS FROM KETCHIKAN-by Teri Goucher

Another Spring has arrived! We had a nearly snow-free winter here at sea level in Ketchikan, and indeed our mountain snow pack is very minimal. The temperature have been mild without freezing overnight for weeks in most areas. Salmonberries are blooming profusely and many flocks of waterfowl have already flown by! Unfortunately, without the usual squalls of spring storms driving birds down to wait out the weather, many migrants just continue to move north bypassing eager birders awaiting their arrival!

The first male Rufous Hummingbird was spotted here was on the 28th of March. The females arrived a week or so later to enjoy the vigorous 'mating swoop display' of the males who have set up their territories!

April's month long hummingbird festival was a huge success again this year with all sorts of fun for bird enthusiast of all ages. There were art shows, craft projects, informative slide show presentations, and of course, bird walks each weekend! Some Western Sandpipers, Killdeer, geese flying overhead, two Hooded Mergansers, and a very cooperative American Kestrel were some of the highlights found on the walks!

Herring spawn along area beaches attracted gulls, scaup and scoters the past month or so. A Little Gull
was seen flying up the Tongass Narrows along with many flocks of **Bonaparte's Gulls**!
Scores of **Fox Sparrows** arrived weeks ago and are commonly seen busily scratching up moss as they prepare to move to breeding areas. Big numbers of **Golden-crowned Sparrows** showed up around mid-month along with a few **White-crowned Sparrows** which are more commonly found on the mainland areas of S.E. Alaska!
There have been small flocks of **American Pipits** and some **Savannah Sparrows** as well. Apparently the **Rustic Bunting** survived the winter at it's favorite garden north of town.
A few groups of **Band-tailed Pigeons** returned during the first part of April to re-establish the few breeding colonies they have maintained for years on our island!
**Orange-crowned Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers** and **Townsend's Warblers** are here and often seen in alders which are rapidly leafing out now.

My favorite part of spring is when the quiet woods of winter come alive with bird song.!!!Just step outside about anywhere and it's easy to hear robins, sparrows, warblers, kinglets, and recently, **Hermit Thrushes** singing away!

Perhaps our entire summer will be as lovely weather-wise as the spring has been allowing nature lovers to enjoy our amazingly unique rainforest paradise!

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**MAY BIRDING NOTES FROM WRANGELL**

**By Bonnie Demerjian**

The Stikine River Birding Festival took place April 27-May 2. Featured guest was Ketchikan artist Evon Zerbetz whose passion is ravens. Events included a display of her work at the Wrangell Museum and classes at the schools and with adults. Shorebirds were flooding the Stikine River delta during the festival, primarily **Western Sandpipers** and **Dunlin**.

Birding and art class were combined in an afternoon on the river with the artist. Other workshops included building birdhouses and a bird walk, **Breakfast with the Birds**. The Stikine River Birding Festival is sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, Wrangell City and Borough and the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative.

In keeping with the festival’s raven theme, one Wrangell birder sent in this recent observation:
“A friend of mine who lives on the water was noticing that herring were spawning in front of his house. He saw a raven come and land on a rock that was right next to the water. This raven plucks a live herring from the water and puts his foot on it. The raven then grabs another herring and flies off with 2 live fish. According to George, this raven accomplished this feat 3 times in a row. Leave it to a raven to catch live food and be efficient in hauling cargo!”

The previous week saw flocks of Snow Geese resting on the flats. Sandhill Cranes began showing up on April 17, just about on schedule, and are continuing to pass in smaller numbers. The Forest Service has been active the past week flying surveys of shorebirds on the delta. An estimated 1 – 3 million Western Sandpipers rest on the flats during this period.

The first Rufous Hummingbird was reported on March 31 though an Anna’s showed up even earlier, on March 19. The first Band-tailed Pigeon was sighted on March 18. April 3 saw the first White-crowned Sparrow. Red-winged blackbirds have been reported at a number of locations including Farm Island on the Stikine delta. Earl and Mary Benitz who live there year round report seeing nine this year and that they usually nest in a nearby pond. A pair of Rusty Blackbirds has been spotted at the Muskeg Meadows Golf Course pond for the third year in a row. They have nested here in previous years.

Northern harriers are reported from the delta and in town. A Red-tailed Hawk also put in an appearance on the delta. Southerly winds appear to have brought in waves of new birds during the past week. Both Violet-green and Tree Sparrows on April 27 and Hermit Thrushes the following day. This week also saw the first Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers arrive.

Raven print from Vickie Buness-Taylor’s kindergarten class with Evon Zerbetz. Students stamped using found objects such as bottle tops and cork.
Haines Bird Report Georgia Giacobbe

Fortunately the birds have returned to Haines bringing spring sooner than color on the trees. Just outside of Haines on the Haines Highway, the Black-billed Magpies who were our winter companions have moved on but the Steller’s Jays have remained. Migrating through are the unmistakable Golden-crowned Sparrows intermixed with White-crowned Sparrows. When not hogging the feeders they are seen scratching in the bushes behind the house. Dark-eye Juncos are scratching side-by-side on the ground. Two Rufous Hummingbirds showed up at my house two weeks ago, had me diving for the hummingbird feeder as soon as they were spotted. Takshanuk Watershed Council's Pam Randalls says the migratory birds were running early this year. The Eulachon ran early this year, also, on both the Chilkat and Chilkoot Rivers. Up the Chilkat, they were chased by Herring, Glaucoous-winged, Mew, and Bonaparte Gulls. She received a report that several Mountain Bluebirds have been spotted this year. And back again this year is the mysterious Pileated Woodpecker. There have been four reports of this woodpecker, unfortunately no one has been able to document with pictures.

The American Bald Eagle Foundation in Haines has some new birds this spring, too. Zilla the falcon, previously trained before coming to Haines, is in her flight weight. She is a hybrid desert falcon from Texas. George the two-toed Bald Eagle has moved in to the foundation, too. A female Barred Owl from Juneau will be in Haines soon. They will continue to accept eagles as the mew continues to be finished.

Thanks to you, the 2010 Great Backyard Bird Count made history, breaking the record for the most checklists submitted. More than 63,000 of you submitted 97,209 checklists! Tallies came in from all 50 states in the U.S. and all 10 provinces and 3 territories of Canada.

What Do Your Data Show?

When it comes to large-scale patterns, one of the more notable trends was the scarcity—and sometimes absence—of winter finches such as Pine Siskins and redpolls. That’s in stark contrast to the massive invasion of siskins during last year’s GBBC. Over time, the GBBC has captured dramatic swings in the numbers of these species reported from year to year. These fluctuations may be influenced by the birds’ food supply and reproductive success far to the north. This year, they presumably didn’t need to travel as far south to find enough food.

Birds at the Top of the Count

In terms of overall numbers of birds counted, the American Robin led the way by a huge margin with 1,850,082 individuals reported. (Of these, 1,450,058 were reported from Saint Petersburg, Florida, where robins roost in massive numbers!) Canada Goose was a distant second with reports of 748,356 birds. Snow Goose, American Crow, and European Starling all came in with about 500,000 individuals each.
Rare Sightings

Participants also reported some rare—and wonderful—sightings. In Lake Havasu City, Arizona, numerous birders reported a Black-legged Kittiwake. In McAllen, Texas, 16 GBBC participants reported a Crimson-collared Grosbeak—the first time the species has been reported during the count since 2005. Birders off the coast of San Diego added a new species to the GBBC species list this year when they sighted a Red-billed Tropicbird, the first verified sighting of this species for the GBBC.

Highlights from Canada

Highlights from Canada this year included a Rustic Bunting seen in Creighton, Saskatchewan. This bird had been delighting birders for much of the winter, so it was great that it hung around to be counted for the GBBC. In Marathon, Ontario, a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch was a spectacular sighting because it was far outside its normal range in the Rocky Mountains. Such outliers always provide a charge of excitement when they are discovered.

For a more detailed summary of this year’s results and to view the count’s Top-10 lists, visit the GBBC website at www.birdcount.org. You can explore maps, view photos, and see who won our prize-drawings.

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For first time members or renewals to the National Audubon Society, please mail this form to:
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You will receive the National Audubon Magazine plus Juneau Chapter newsletter The Raven.

$20 (1-year introductory rate) _____; $15 (1-year student/senior rate) _____
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Box 21725, Juneau, AK 99802. You will receive the Juneau Chapter newsletter The Raven.

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