

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

November 2010

Juneau Audubon Public Meeting

Thursday, November 11, 7:00 p.m.

UAS Egan Bldg, Glacier View Room 221/222

HIKING THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL and Lightweight Backpacking

Jeff Sauer will show pictures and share his stories of thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail, April to September 2010. Jeff will also explain and show the various items of lightweight gear that now enable nearly anyone to backpack.

The AT is one of three major national scenic trails in the US. The other two are the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) and the Continental Divide Trail (CDT). The AT is 2175 miles long stretching from Georgia to Maine. It travels through 14 states. Jeff did a classic AT thru-hike, hiking from south to north, Springer Mountain Georgia to Mt. Katahdin Maine, in one, five and a half month-long trek. At least four others from Juneau and Haines did sections of the AT this summer. Anne and Pat Murphy of Juneau hiked the AT Maine section (280 miles), which was their last section of the AT. After several years of section hiking, Pat and Anne's Maine hike marked the completion of the AT for them. Irene Alexakos and Ben Kirpatrick of Haines/ Juneau also hiked the Maine section of the AT this summer. Section hiking is popular on all three of the major US trails, as well as thru-hiking. Hikers encountered on the trail this year ranged in age from 10 to 70, with major groups of thru-hikers being the college-aged crowd, the 30 years olds, and the middle-aged crowd (a substantial and formidable presence on the AT). For Jeff this was his second major trail. He thru-hiked the Pacific Crest Trail in 1985. Thus, his presentation will also compare these two very different hikes, as well as what has changed in the last couple of decades in backpacking (new lightweight packs and sleeping bags; cell phones, cell phone apps such as birdwatching apps; and ultralight high powered head lamps - young dudes and dudettes hiking whenever they want, including through the night.)



**Tracks and Signs --November 6th from 10-12
Meet at Brotherhood Bridge Parking Lot
(Across from Don Abel)**

Juneau Audubon Society and Naturalist Kevin O'Malley are continuing their fall/winter Tracks and Signs Programs. This fall/winter animal tracking and natural history season will meet once per month (mostly the first Saturday of every month except January). Our goal is to study and discover the interesting relationship between mammals and birds to their environment.

Dress for the weather and be prepared to walk off trail. Elders come share your stories and families are welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

2010 Thanksgiving Bird Count by Patty Rose

The 2010 Thanksgiving Bird Count takes place November 25. This count is a great opportunity for citizen scientists of all ages to contribute valuable data. It is easy and fun--It takes only one hour and can be performed in the comfort of your home. The participant counts all the birds that visit a count circle during one hour. The participant selects the time of the count and a 15-foot diameter count circle. For example, the count circle could be located around a bird feeder that is visible from a window. The count form and instructions are available on the Juneau Audubon Society website at www.juneau-audubon-society.org.

Editor's note: If you have been getting way more Audubon renewal notices than you like or need, you can request fewer mailings or a paperless renewal process by calling Membership Customer Service at 800-274-4201 or email Audubon@emailcustomerservice.com.

New Board Member -- Julie Koehler

Julie Koehler, looks forward to serving Audubon once again. In the early 1980's Julie lived in Anchorage where she worked two years as secretary in the Audubon Alaska office. After leaving that position to start her own typing business, Julie served one year each as the Anchorage Audubon chapter's conservation chair, vice president, and president. Upon moving to Juneau she spent the years 1985-1990 working as the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council's office manager. Now, after a long hiatus from paid or volunteer conservation work, she has decided it is time to once again become involved with protecting the wonderful ancient forests, waterways, birds, and other wildlife of Southeast Alaska that she holds so dear.

Juneau Bird Report for October by Patty Rose

A strong spike in the number of migrating birds in mid-October resulted in some interesting observations in Juneau. Waterfowl observations included a **Ruddy Duck** on Miller-Honsinger Pond near the Temsco facility by Nick Hajdukovich on October 20 (NH). Paul Suchanek found **Yellow-billed Loons** on October 19 at the end of the North Douglas Powerline Trail, October 26 at Point

Bridget State Park, and October 30 on Fritz Cove from the North Douglas Highway. A **Double-crested Cormorant** was found at the Fish Creek delta on October 14 (PS).

Rough-legged Hawks passed through Juneau over a one-week period beginning on October 13, when a dark-phase bird was seen on the Mendenhall Wetlands from the Airport Dike Trail (NH, PR). On October 15, one was seen at Point Bridget State Park (PS). On October 17, one was seen near the golf course (NH), and on October 18, two were seen at that location (MS). On October 19, a high count of three, including a dark-phase bird, were observed near the golf course (RA, MS, GV). Other raptors included a **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk** at Brotherhood Park on October 21 (PS) and a **Peregrine Falcon** at the mouth of the Mendenhall River on October 17 (NH).



Rough-legged Hawk

By Mark Schwan



Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk

Paul Suchanek

October 26 was a late date to find two **Black Oystercatchers** at Point Bridget State Park (PS). A single **Baird's Sandpiper** was seen on October 13 - 14 on the Mendenhall Wetlands from the Airport Dike Trail (NH, MS). A **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was found near the Airport Dike Trail on October 23 (PR, GV). On October 20, Gus van Vliet observed a large flock of 37 **Wilson's Snipe** from the Airport Dike Trail. Paul Suchanek reported seeing two interesting gulls on October 16, a **Ring-billed Gull** at the Gold Creek delta and a **Glaucous Gull** at the City Dock near Taku Fisheries.

Eurasian Collared-doves continued in Juneau in October. Up to four were observed in the Airport area

neighborhood from October 4 - 13, and two were observed near Auke Lake on October 20 (NH). An immature male **Anna's Hummingbird** visited a West Juneau feeder October 29 - 31 (PR, NH). On October 24, Gus van Vliet located a **Mountain Bluebird** on the Airport Dike Trail. Observations of **Cedar Waxwings** included five on October 5 and four on October 13 in the Airport area neighborhood (NH) and three downtown on October 26 (PR). Two **Palm Warblers** were seen in Juneau during October. The first was found by Paul Suchanek on the Airport Dike Trail on October 13 (PS, m.ob.). The second was found at the



Palm Warbler

By Nick Hajdukovich

Jensen-Olson Arboretum by Nick Hajdukovich and Merrill Jensen on October 21. This species is not seen every year in Juneau, so finding two in one year is exceptional.



White-throated Sparrow By Patty Rose

One or two White-throated Sparrows are usually seen annually in Juneau, so observations of five during October was unusual. The earliest **White-throated Sparrow** was at an Auke Bay residence September 27 - October 18 (GV). Single birds were also seen at the Airport Dike Trail on October 10 (PR, BA), at a North Douglas residence October 18 - 20 (PS), at a West Juneau residence October 18 - 20 (PR), and near the Airport Dike Trail parking lot on October 20 (PR). All were tan-striped morphs except for the October 10 bird.

Two additional songbird observations, one late and one early, wrap up songbird observations for October. A late **Western Tanager** was seen in the airport area neighborhood on October 5 (NH). Three early **Snow Buntings** were seen at Eagle Beach on October 30 (PS, BA, PR).

To find out more about the distribution of birds in Juneau, visit Alaska eBird at <http://ebird.org/content/ak>.

Thanks to those who contributed observations for this report. Contributors include Bev Agler (BA), Robert Armstrong (RA), Nick Hajdukovich (NH), Merrill Jensen (MJ), Patty Rose (PR), Mark Schwan (MS), Paul Suchanek (PS), and Gus van Vliet (GV).

Sitka Observations By Matt Goff

Although this October saw lower than average rainfall, it provided some excitement in the form of powerful storms with strong winds. Seas topped out over 30 feet at the Cape Edgecumbe buoy with a maximum gust of 74mph during the most severe of the storms. Termination dust graced the mountains around town, and although the official temperature (taken at the airport) never dropped below freezing, there were a few days with frost.

In addition to the typical fall flocks of geese migrating overhead, a mid-month influx of sparrows, and the return of **American Coots** to Swan Lake, several unusual birds were reported during the period. Of particular note were a **Golden Eagle** at Starrigavan, a **Black-headed Grosbeak** and **White-throated Sparrow** seen a couple weeks apart at the same feeder, a late **Flycatcher** species at Starrigavan, an early **Snowy Owl** on Harbor Mountain, a **Short-eared Owl** on Mt. Verstovia, an **Osprey** at Indian River, a **Canvasback** or two at Swan Lake, and multiple reports of **Eurasian Collared-Doves**. Other sightings of interest included over 30 **Ring-necked Ducks** on Swan Lake, a **Ptarmigan** in Totem Park (not

typically seen at low elevations), **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** in the Channel, as well as at Bear Cove, **Western Screech Owls** calling more frequently, and a possible **Long-billed Murrelet**.

For a couple of other Sitka bird observations, visit:

<http://www.sitkanature.org/wordpress/2010/10/03/migrating-geese-4/>

<http://www.sitkanature.org/wordpress/2010/10/02/northwestern-crows-observing-death/>

Thanks to, Marge Ward, Lucy Pizzuto-Phillips, Carrie Hisaoka, Paul Norwood and several others on the SitkaBirds e-mail list for providing reports (sign up for the list at <http://www.sitkanature.org/>).

Haines Report – 16th Annual Bald Eagle Festival set for November 10-14

By Georgia Giacobbe

Since last spring, eagles were the focus of the Haines High School Citizen Science class. The class located 23 eagle nests to watch during the summer. Of those, ten nests had eagles sitting on them from early May to mid June. Four of the nests were in the Chilkoot River area and six were along the Haines Highway (Chilkat River). The weather during that time was hot and dry. By the third week of June, none of the ten nests were active. They don't know why the eagle nests failed, but suspect it may have been due to hot dry weather and lack of food for the eaglets.

Pam Randles noted additional bird differences at the same time. **Common Mergansers** usually have young at the same time as eaglet hatching, especially in the Chilkoot River area. This year the mergansers had ducklings three weeks before eagle hatching. At the same time, some new migratory birds appeared this year. There was a confirmed presence of **Eurasian Collared Doves**. They stayed in the neighborhood of 6th and Dalton Streets. Other doves were spotted around town and up the highway.

The annual fall migration of eagles to the Chilkat Valley has begun, and preparations are well underway for the **16th Annual Bald Eagle Festival set for November 10th through the 14th**. All things eagle and wildlife will be celebrated and presented over the four day festival. For eagle viewing, the peak area is between 19.5 to 23 mile on the Haines Highway, especially if the weather is freezing. Walden Lee is the 2010 photographer, conducting field workshops and a "Photography Concert" the evening of November 11th. Every day at the American Bald Eagle Foundation museum between 12:00 and 1:00 pm, a Live Bird Presentation is planned of the 8 resident birds at the foundation. The Live Eagle Release on Saturday will take place in Klukwan with songs and dances in regalia in Klukwan at the Long House and Camp. Other birds and wildlife are represented in the festival, also. Dr. Scott Ford will discuss sea duck research Thursday morning, and a Yukon's Wildlife Viewing program featuring the annual celebration of swans is scheduled Friday morning. For complete schedule, go to www.baldeaglefestival.org.

Wrangell Report – November 2010 by Bonnie Demerjian

A small number of **Eurasian Collared Doves** look as if they will be making Wrangell their winter home this year. They have been around all month and are visiting feeders at several locations. **Mourning Doves** were reported by several observers.

Flocks of **Sandhill** cranes began appearing around the second week of October, passing overhead in the evenings. Southbound **Snow Geese** were observed flying toward and feeding on the Stikine River flats beginning in mid-month.

Resident birders on Farm Island report 2 male **Red-winged Blackbirds** and a female at their feeder. They say they usually have one or more males winter over each year. They have also been hearing and observing the **Great Horned Owls** that live near their cabin. A **Great Gray Owl** was reported on Woronkofski Island at the end of the month.



A **Red-tailed Hawk**, which was reported last month from the Stikine delta islands, is still around and often spotted by residents there. At the Inner Harbor, an **Osprey** was seen early in the month. And, as is common in winter, a few **Black-billed Magpies** have been seen on both the lower Stikine and in town.

Wilson's Snipe are generally solitary and always elusive but a flock of seven startled one observer at the Wrangell running track early in the month. A lone **White-crowned Sparrow** was also observed near the ferry terminal.

We have asked Prill Mollick (former Juneau resident) and Mike Seifert (summer Forest Service employee) to send interesting reports from farther south.

The Carolina Wren By Prill (Isleib) Mollick
Smoky Mountains, N.C.

The Carolina Wren is a sparrow sized songbird with rusty tones above, buffy under parts, and white eyebrow stripes. Its perky tail is often held upright. The beak slightly curves downward. This little bird has a loud voice and a variety of songs. Their songs often consist of very loud triplets. Some birders claim one song says: “tea kettle, tea kettle tea kettle” Around here they must have a southern accent, because what I hear is: “hey mister, hey mister, hey mister!” and “deeper, deeper, deeper, deep!”(nothing like an oven birds “teacher- teach”.) To warn intruders too near the nesting site, they make loud harsh rasping, scolding sounds.

They nest in unusual places. One year I found their domed shaped nest with a small side entrance, atop a box of tools, on a shelf under our deck. It was made of dried grass, pine needles, and lined with soft material. There were 4 eggs in the nest. They often lay four to six white or pinkish eggs that are spotted with brown. One egg did not hatch. That fall I took both nest and egg to the school where I occasionally substitute teach. The fifth grade class decided they would help that egg to hatch. Taking turns they held the egg in their warm hands. Yes – one student held it too tight and it broke.

I once observed them building a nest on the ground under a pile of dried grasses. Another summer they built a nest inside the dome on top of the propane tank. The neighbors’ cat, which we “adopted” when

they moved out of state, soon noticed the wren activity at the nest on the tank. We kept that frustrated cat indoors until the young wrens left the nest. Egg incubation is 12 – 14 days and the young leave the nest in 12 – 14 days.

One year a wren started nest building in a neighbors' newspaper delivery tube next to their mailbox. When the neighbor discovered it he promptly removed the material. That wren had to find another odd spot to nest.

They build “decoy nests” as well. I had a cute bird house that a wren started filling with nest materials. I looked forward to the wren family activity. But it wasn't for a nest at all. He had stuffed it full of twigs, pine needles and leaves so that no bird could get in.

Both parents participate in nest building and feeding the young. They eat insects, spiders, moths, caterpillars and are known to eat small lizards, tree frogs, snails and even small snakes. They also eat seeds and berries. One day I watched a wren with a large mint green caterpillar in its beak. It whipped that caterpillar back and forth on the ground, “whip-whomp”, “whip-whomp” until it was lifeless and safe to feed the young.

During winter months I hang out a log of drilled holes filled with a bird pudding of suet, peanut butter, and cornmeal. (A family tradition started by my brother Pete when he was a teenager in Scouts.) The wrens come and feast on that peanut butter mixture. The Carolina Wren is such a delightful little bird to have year round in the neighborhood.

Mike Seifert, Missouri

The trees are turning to their fall colors and are at the peak right now. We had our first frost last night (10/31) and it is cooler tonight. I made it back alright here to the midwest but it seems a bit too tame after being in AK. No bears though a few are seen, but no salmon, but we do have a few eagles in the area.

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