Fall & Winter Programs Going Virtual

The whole world is changing due to Covid-19 but our commitment to bringing educational and fun programs to Southeast Alaska has not.

Available online soon: Juneau Rare Bird Photo Share. This was held as a Zoom meeting, and recorded for posting on our Facebook page.

This was our first attempt and it was quite successful, with over 30 members, friends and neighbors joining in real time.

Stay tuned for more! Info will be posted on the JAS website and Facebook pages.

Photo: Turkey Vulture at Mendenhall Wetlands, summer 2017. G. Baluss.
President’s Message: What’s in a Name?

Gwen Baluss

Audubon. For me, more than anything, it’s a brand. It means birds. And conservation. Something we can all be proud to be associated with as members, as volunteers, a little plus mark on our own personal “branding”. Most of us know that John James Audubon painted birds in beautiful detail and his legacy increased the appreciation of birds that the American public carries on today. All true. But unfortunately Audubon’s full history is not all positive. Like many influential early scientists, he espoused racist viewpoints, and, even worse, was a slave holder.

It seems a good time to move away from naming things, including clubs, after people who do not symbolize all of our values. Or really, people at all, because by singling out some, you belittle others; better to focus on the mission. I hope there will be helpful discussion that ensues as National Audubon Society faces up to its imperfect past and invites more voices into our collective future. For years, the Society has been putting diversity and inclusion forward as a priority and, as a metric in each chapter’s annual reporting, giving a strong signal that chapters should be doing the same.

If you have ideas on how JAS can improve at reaching out to groups who may have not traditionally been part of our activities, please let us know.

Once, I went to see a big exhibit of Audubon’s art in a museum. What inspired me was how bad the early work was. Clearly with persistence it got better. We must get better at what we do.

Nature is for everyone. Enjoying it and preserving it everyone’s right and responsibility. We look forward to celebrating and preserving biodiversity —and human diversity.

(First Annual) Bird-a-thon a Huge Success

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and the tenacity of birders the May event surpassed our expectations. Over 50 birders around Southeast Alaska participated, tallying at least 130 species on a beautiful sunny day! It was especially nice to have an event that could be pulled off safely outdoors, and yet bring a sense of community. Half the proceeds were in turn donated to Southeast Alaska Food Bank.

Join the Board What a great opportunity!

We have four vacancies at this time: Field Trips Coordinator, Newsletter Compiler, Education Chair and At-large. We really need help!

Please contact Gwen by email: president@juneau-audubon-society.org

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Wandering Tattler, one of the less common species found on May 9.

Audubon’s “American Crossbill”
Successful Summer Internships

Thanks to a National Audubon Society Collaboration Grant, and JAS internal funds, JAS was able to host two Bird Conservation Interns summer 2020. JAS recruited Ashley Murphy, a UAS student, and Jessica Millsaps, a recent Juneau local graduate.

Both worked on monitoring Tree Swallow Nest boxes, and Arctic Tern breeding colonies, as well as education and outreach. We appreciate their hard work and are happy to have provided some great experience for their budding careers.

Ashley: “This internship has been a great opportunity for me to explore more of my interest in wildlife. I have really enjoyed seeing how many different species of birds we have in this area and learning to distinguish the different, and learn more about hummingbirds, swallows, terns, and gulls. A highlight so far was being able to hold a female Rufous Hummingbird and watch it fly off as it was released!” Ashley is studying Environmental Science.

Jessica: “As an intern for the Juneau Audubon, I assist in trapping Rufous Hummingbirds and monitoring the nests of Tree Swallows and Arctic Terns. I also help collect data and enter it on science websites. Monitoring the breeding success in swallows and terns helps us to understand how they are adapting to changing weather conditions and food sources. I have really enjoyed being a part of this project.” Jessica is already an accomplished birder and photographer.

Farewell and Thanks to Board Members Who Have Migrated

We appreciate the work and company of both Jason Colon who served as Field Trips Coordinator, and Alexia Kiefer, who has been Education Chair. They will be sorely missed! JAS especially appreciated having Alexia and Jason serve because they are a little younger than our average board member, offering fresh perspectives. We hope they gained good experience on this board and, when the work and school loads calm down a bit, trust they will find their wings again as volunteers or employees in the non-profit world.

Some retrospectives. Check out this great article about birding for everyone in the Juneau Empire, by Jason: [https://www.juneauempire.com/life/sustainable-alaska-counting-for-conservation](https://www.juneauempire.com/life/sustainable-alaska-counting-for-conservation)

We fondly remember the many, many great events Alexia organized with youth, and her wonderful energy and commitment to conservation.
**Wetland Cleanup with Juneau Youth**

By Ashley Murphy

The Audubon Society was able to collaborate with a local Boy Scout group and a clean-up along the wetlands near Egan Highway south of Sunny Point. This clean-up got young Scouts involved in cleaning up one of the most diverse ecosystems in Southeast, Alaska. This clean-up also helped give a look into the amount of trash that can accumulate when it is not disposed of properly. This is a great exercise everyone can practice when outdoors. When we see trash, we can dispose of it properly (if it is safe to handle).

One of the reasons The Audubon Society organized this wetland clean-up was to spread awareness of the danger of plastics to shore birds. This clean-up helped reduce the likelihood of plastics and waste from breaking down into hard to remove microplastics. This was a very successful wetland clean-up and we collected 6 bags of trash, with much of it localized along the highway. The microplastics can be dangerous because they are often mistaken for food by the shorebirds, causing health problems. Our goal for this clean-up was to spread awareness of the dangers that plastics pose to birds and preserve their habitats so they can be here for today, tomorrow and seasons to come. Clean-ups are a great way to get more people involved in keeping shorebird ecosystems clean.

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**Tree Swallow Season Summary 2020**

By Jessica Millsaps

- Of the 58 Tree Swallow nest boxes JAS put up around Juneau this year, 49 boxes had swallow eggs laid in them, 9 were unused, and 3 were taken over by Chestnut-backed Chickadees.
- The first tree swallow egg was laid 5/15 and the last was laid 6/19, the average lay dates being 5/19 and 5/20.
- Tree swallows laid a confirmed total of 283 eggs with average clutch size being 6 eggs.
- The largest clutch had 8 eggs (an unusually high number for this species).
- Of 283 eggs, only 14 failed to hatch.
- The first chick hatched 6/7 and the last one hatched 7/4.
- A total of 254 chicks hatched with 191 chicks successfully ledged.
- 2 nests were predated and 7 nests failed, possibly due to cooler than average temperatures.
- The first chicks to fledge took flight 6/24 and the last ones to fledge finally left 7/28 (probably our latest record). 41 nests successfully fledged some chicks but only 16 nests were 100% successful with no losses.