More Virtual Programs on the Way

While hunkering down we continue leaning about and enjoy the nature of Southeast Alaska. Programs will be aired via Zoom meeting the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. and, when possible, added to our Facebook page afterwards.

December 10: JAS Summer Bird Conservation Interns will talk about the studies they helped with: Tree Swallow nest boxes, Arctic Tern Monitoring & Rufous Hummingbird banding.

January 14: John Hudson with Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition will address local watershed restoration and invasive species.

Look for login information on our Facebook Page and Website.

And, if you miss a program, it may be posted on the JAS Facebook Page.
Environmental Education Continues

Despite the pandemic and a vacancy for our Education Chair, board members have pulled off a few youth events.

This fall Programs Chair Brenda Wright and a Girl Scout group fought the cold and wet to glean the Mendenhall Wetlands for Bald Eagle feathers. JAS maintains a permit to submit citizen-collected feathers to the US Fish and Wildlife Service -who in turn distributes the feathers to Native Americans for ceremonial use.

At-Large board member Winston Smith reached several classes at Mendenhall River Elementary School (remotely) to teach about animal migration and the risks climate change. School-age kids like hearing from “real scientists” of which Winston, an esteemed researcher, certainly is.

PFD Time, Don’t forget to Pick, Click, Give

We want to thank the incredible generosity of those who thought of us when they participated in the PCG. This has turned out to be a major source of funding for Juneau Audubon Society.

Heres’ Another Way to Help: Fred Meyer Will Donate to Non-profits

Sign up for the Community Rewards program by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to the Juneau Audubon Society at www.fredmeyer.com/community-rewards. Search for us by name or by our non-profit number: 90656.

Then, every time you shop and use your Rewards Card, you are helping the JAS earn a donation! You still earn your Rewards Points, Fuel Points, and Rebates, If you do not have a Rewards Card, they are available at the Customer Service desk.

Board of Directors

Gwen Baluss President
Marsha Squires Vice President
Patty Rose Treasurer
Amy Sherwin Secretary
Lizzie Solger Membership
Brenda Wright Programs
Debbie Hart Conservation
Winston Smith At-Large

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

Masked and distanced scouts brave the weather at Mendenhall Wetlands.
President’s Message: More about names.

Gwen Baluss

Birds, unlike most kinds of living things, have fairly consistent officially recognized English common names. It could be argued that we don’t need two sets of names, since the scientific name is unambiguous. But, considering the number of hobbyists and citizen scientists who use the names, its nice to have a universal system that doesn’t have people trying to write or say something like “Haliaeetus leucocephalus” every time a Bald Eagle goes by. Even Spanish-speaking ornithologists usually know the English name (in addition to the scientific; just one of the ways we who study migratory birds are regularly outclassed by our southern counterparts). But despite the ease of use, the official common names do come with their fair share of consternation. In addition to the disruptions that frequent taxonomic rearrangements create for listers and biologist’s databases, there may be heartburn over what the bird should be called. There are a lot of names that we all recognize as in need of improvement. Perhaps a bird is named after a place that it only rarely migrates through (e.g. Nashville Warbler—which, by the way, was recently seen in Juneau!), or a field mark that is not really conspicuous (e.g. Ring-necked Duck) or, they are just plain boring. I was disappointed when the Winter Wren became Pacific Wren in the West. After all, a peak at any field guide that covers south of Alaska will reveal there are many wren species towards the Pacific. Its also odd to talk about a bird whose name includes “Common” when it is seriously uncommon, either in its total population, or perhaps in that particular location. In general, the American Ornithological Society North American Classification Committee (in case you wondering, that’s who is ‘in charge’ of the naming) seeks to be highly conservative in re-naming birds, only doing so when they feel there is no other way to distinguish between two different species, or merge two forms of the same animal. So probably none of the reasons I’ve brought up so far would be an urgent reason to create the “Pacific Northwest Wren”. But recently an interesting and compelling debate has emerged about eponymous bird names. Who were all these guys anyway—Swainson, Wilson MacGillivray and the like? (See pg. 5)
Christmas Bird Counts

Its CBC season, but things will be a bit different this year. National Audubon Society has put out some safety guidelines that feel they can continue this 100+ year tradition of valuable data collection.

In Juneau, there will be a count, Saturday Dec. 19; but with limitations due to Covid-19. The compiler will assign discrete areas to experienced birders who have done the count before. Unfortunately there will be no training of new counters or gatherings of birders this year.

There is an opportunity to sign up as a feeder watcher and, as always, please report any unusual species sightings seen during count week (Wednesday, December 16 – Tuesday, December 22) via eBird or directly to compiler Patty Rose. (email: p_rose_raven@yahoo.com)

For other communities, you can find out more at National Audubon’s website https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count

Then go the map and click on the little bird in your area and see contact information for the compiler.

(Or, trying calling your local USFS Ranger District office, most have personnel that are organizers or participants.)

Want to brush up on what birds are around SEAK in the winter? Check out our new photographic slide show of species that occur on Juneau’s CBC—link is on the Home Page of our website.

Happy Holidays

To all our members: we appreciate you, we miss you, we understand its been a tough year for some of you, and hope for a better year ahead.