

Bird Life of Point Bridget State Park (2008 Update)

compiled by Paul Suchanek
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This report updates bird occurrence data for Point Bridget State Park with information collected in 2008. It updates four reports which presented bird occurrence data through 2007. This report presents an updated checklist (revised to 2008 Clements taxonomy) and revised occurrence information along with notes on interesting bird observations obtained in 2008.

The study area and methods in 2008 were the same as in 2007. Seasons were again defined as those used in North American Birds:

Winter: December - February,
Spring: March - May,
Summer: June – July, and
Fall: August - November

A total of 29 bird counts were taken in 2008 with good coverage during May, June, and August. There were no trips in December and January and only single trips in February and November. Heavy snow limited effort in the winter months.

Table 1. Birding trips to Point Bridget State Park by season and month, 2008.

Season	Trips	Month	Trips
Winter	1	December	0
		January	0
		February	1
Spring	11	March	2
		April	3
		May	6
Summer	7	June	5
		July	2
Fall	10	August	4
		September	3
		October	2
		November	1
Total	29		29

NEW BIRD SPECIES

Through 2007, 203 bird species had been detected in the study area. In 2008, I identified 3 additional bird species in the park for a total of 206 species.

Tundra Swan – A flock of 40 birds flying around the Echo Cove area on 10/18 provided the first definite record for the area. Subsequently, a small flock of 4 adults resting on a beaver pond on 10/24 provided the second record for the area. On 4/21/96, however, a flock of 56 swans migrating overhead may well have been this species.

Slaty-backed Gull – (rare in Alaska and casual in Juneau) An adult picked out of a huge flock of gulls feeding on herring spawn on 5/07 was the first record of this species.

Long-tailed Jaeger – (unsubstantiated in Juneau) An adult was observed from an Alaska state ferry on 5/17 as it flew with 3 Parasitic Jaegers and possibly 1 other Long-tailed Jaeger west of Pt. Bridget. This species has only been reported a couple of times in the Juneau area.

Several large owls were reported by visitors to the Blue Mussel Cabin on 5/04 which presumably were either Barred or Great Horned owls.

CHANGES IN BIRD SPECIES STATUS

In the following section, significant revisions in status by species are detailed as determined from the 2008 counts. Occurrences of unusual (rare in Juneau or Alaska) species in 2008 are also detailed here.

Also an updated checklist is attached (Appendix A) which details distribution for much of the year by bimonthly periods. This checklist also delineates abundance status by period:

- c = common – frequently found, or flocking species detected in numbers >20 on several occasions
- u = uncommon – infrequently observed (at least 2 records in period), usually small numbers, although flocking species sometimes detected in large numbers
- r = rare – only one record in period

The new species is delineated in “red” in the checklist and any revisions to status are also outlined in “red”. Most of the 2008 updates of the checklist are minor, and many were not deemed significant enough to detail in this section. I also rearranged

the taxonomic sequence to match the 2008 Clements checklist. In 2007, 145 species were detected during my counts, about average for 2004-2006.

Large aggregations of gulls and Surf Scoters formed in response to Pacific herring spawn in early May. Huge concentrations of Surf Scoters totaling 25,000 or more were observed from 5/04 to 5/09. Peak counts of gull by species in May ranged up to 7,500 Mew Gulls (5/07), 1,500 Glaucous-winged Gulls (5/07), 10,000 Thayer's Gulls (5/07), 1,000 Herring Gulls (5/07), and 10,000 Bonaparte's Gulls (5/04). The gull flocks gathered and dispersed very quickly. On 4/30 and 5/18, total gull counts were less than 500.

Poor runs of pink and chum salmon into Cowee Creek attracted relatively low numbers of gulls in July and August.

Greater White-fronted Goose – One bird with a flock of Canada Geese on 10/18 was the second October record and latest by about 2 weeks.

Snow Goose – Three counts from 5/07 to 5/18 included flocks of 40 to 74 birds, all of which greatly exceeded the previous record count of 10 birds.

Brant – (rare in Juneau) Three birds on 4/25 were the earliest on record with the previous earliest on 5/30.

Gadwall – Three June records of 1 or 2 birds were unusual in that there was only 1 previous June record.

Northern Pintail – Three June records of 3 or 4 birds were the first summer records of this species.

Double-crested Cormorant – (rare in Juneau) An immature on 4/21 was the earliest on record while 1 on 4/30 provided the second April record. Three adults were observed on 5/04. This species seems to be occurring more regularly in the Juneau area.

Osprey – (rare in Juneau) Single migrants were observed on 5/07 and 9/16, the 7th and 8th records of this species.

Rough-legged Hawk – (rare in Juneau) A striking dark-phase bird was observed migrating by on 4/21. This is only the 2nd spring record and 5th overall.

Golden Eagle – (rare in Juneau) A high flying immature and a low flying adult were both observed on 5/07. This species is generally an early migrant so these birds may be summer residents in the mountains nearby. There are only 4 previous records for the park.

Peregrine Falcon – (rare in Juneau) An individual flying up Cowee Creek on 8/27 provided the earliest fall migrant by about a week. Oddly enough, this species has yet to be recorded in the spring.

Pacific Golden-Plover – (rare in Juneau) A distant juvenile on 9/16 was only the 2nd fall record and 4th overall.

Black Oystercatcher – Three on 9/16 and 1 on 10/18 were the first fall records. There are at least 23 spring and summer records.

Whimbrel – A flock of 15 on 5/18 exceeded the previous high count of 8 birds.

Stilt Sandpiper – (rare in Juneau) Two juveniles on 8/21 were the only 3rd record of this species..

Iceland Gull – (casual in Juneau) A 3rd or 4th cycle individual (Kumlien's ssp.) was picked out of a huge flock of gulls feeding on herring spawn on 5/07. A few individuals of this species probably occur regularly in the large spring flocks of Thayer's Gulls.

Glaucous Gull – (rare in Juneau) A 1st cycle individual was picked out of a huge flock of gulls feeding on herring spawn on 5/09. The odd individual of this species is also found in large spring gull aggregations.

Parasitic Jaeger – (rare in Juneau) Three light-phase adults on 5/17 and 2 on 5/22 were typical spring records. A light-phase bird and a dark-phase bird observed on 9/11 were a bit later than normal for a fall record.

Northern Flicker – (rare in Juneau) Flickers were heard on 5/18, 6/03, and 7/24. These records supplement records from 2006 and 2007 which suggest local breeding. Two yellow-shafted flickers were also observed on 9/02, presumably these were migrants.

Cliff Swallow – (rare in Juneau) A single bird was observed on 6/03, the 2nd summer record.

Mountain Bluebird – (rare in Juneau and Alaska) Five birds on 4/21 constituted a typical spring record.

Cedar Waxwing – (rare in Juneau) A flock of 6 on 5/29 was the first spring record of this late migrant. Two were subsequently observed on 6/23 and 8/07.

Chipping Sparrow – (rare in Juneau) A singing male on 5/29 provided the first spring record of this species.

Golden-crowned Sparrow – A juvenile observed on 7/30 provided the first summer record. This individual presumably moved down from a nearby subalpine ridge where it was fledged.

Rusty Blackbird – An individual on 10/24 was the latest fall record by about 3 weeks.

Pine Grosbeak – An individual heard calling as it flew over on 6/16 provided the first summer record. This individual probably wandered down from sub-alpine breeding habitat in the mountains nearby. This species primarily shows up in October and November as a fall migrant and has yet to be recorded in the spring.