

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.



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December 2002

December ALMANAC

Swans are gathering at Peterburgh's Blind Slough, where 18 swans and over 60 bald eagles were sighted in late November.



*Petersburg Chamber of Commerce /
Jan Hill*

CAREFULLY re-hang bird feeders (some bears just don't see the virtue of a long winter's nap).

Plan to join the 103rd Christmas Bird Count on December 14.

Monthly Meeting

Thursday, December 12, 7:30 p.m.
Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School Library

Detecting change from aerial photos

Richard Carstensen

To study nature is to study change. Aerial photos are wonderful tools for detecting and quantifying change from natural succession or human impact. Richard Carstensen will show two examples, one assessing the loss of "Landmark Forest" (Alaska's greatest big tree stands) on the southern Tongass, and another dealing with changes to salt marsh communities on the Mendenhall Wetlands with glacial rebound.

103rd Christmas Bird Count

Deanna MacPhail

The Juneau CBC will be held this year on **Saturday, December 14**. As usual, volunteers should meet at either of the two McDonalds Restaurants no later than 8 a.m. on count day, with appropriate attire and binoculars. People interested in counting in the downtown, Douglas, and north Douglas Island areas should meet at the downtown restaurant; birders wishing to work the Lemon Creek, airport, Mendenhall Valley and Auke Bay areas should meet at the valley restaurant. Hopefully, many of our veteran group leaders will again be available to participate. Juneau is fortunate to have a group of dedicated CBC volunteers who bring a high level of skill and interest which provide accurate identification and consistent area coverage from year to year.

Birders of all skill levels are encouraged to participate and this is an excellent time to improve your birding skills by working with the more experienced team leaders. Even if you are unable to commit the entire day to the count, you are encouraged to turn out for a few hours. Who knows, you might just see something no one else has noticed! And, if you have a feeder at home, be sure to keep count there and turn in your numbers at the end of the day.

There will be a potluck in the evening to share in the events of the day and to conduct the tally of birds and species seen. The potluck will be at the home of Mark Schwan and Debi Ballam, who, in spite of previous experience, continue to allow us to gather in their home.

(continued on page 2)



Notes from the board

Chris Kent, vice-president

This year I have assumed the position of vice-president. For the last few years I've been the Conservation Chairman. In the conservation position, I was responsible for the majority of comments we made as an organization on conservation issues. This took considerable time and in making the move to vice president, I considered my new responsibilities as less time consuming. In the position as Vice President, I will be supporting Brenda in her role as president and assisting committee chairpersons in their tasks.

One of my thoughts during the November general election was about opportunities. We heard a lot about how this is a resource state and the development of resources will balance the State's budget. To start the process, the new administration is proposing community meetings to identify priorities. It is my hope that Alaskans will voice a concern for the wise utilization of resources and not allow the liquidation of this heritage for the sake of a balanced budget. I consider natural resources as assets and in the analogy of a portfolio, some assets should be protected for the long term while others should be used without jeopardizing the viability of a sustainable return. In balancing the environment against economic development, we must plan for the long term and not for maximum yields. The community meetings are an opportunity to say that the environment is important to us. Please consider either attending these meetings or writing a letter to the Governor on the importance of a healthy environment.

Board profile **Chris Kent**

I learned of Audubon when I was a backcountry trail worker for the U.S. Forest Service. We spent the early morning hours identifying birds for wildlife surveys. Great job! I was the one taking notes and I never did get very good at recognizing birds. But, I learned to write comment letters and have submitted comments on nearly every new wildlife refuge that was created by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). I've been published in numerous Environmental Impact Statements. Our past President, Amy Skilbred, invited me to an Audubon meeting and when I mentioned that my hobby was writing letters I was immediately designated as Conservation Chair. My education is in fresh water aquatic biology but my current job is computer related. I look forward to continuing to serve Audubon in my new capacity as Vice President.

Christmas Bird Count

(Continued from page 1)

Although Juneau may claim Alaska bragging rights for the most species tallied (75) in last year's count, Kodiak, which topped out at 74, will surely be seeking to overtake us. And we shouldn't get too comfortable with our numbers as Cordova, Sitka and Homer all reported more than 62 species. Both Prudhoe Bay and Nome reported just one species, the Common Raven, but Nome participants did their count on Dec. 15, a day with low temperature reported at minus 29° F.!

Previous count data are now available on the Audubon website at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc>.

For more information on this year's Juneau Christmas Bird Count, call Deanna MacPhail, at 789-0651.

January Raven Deadline

Please submit articles for the January issue no later than December 20 to upclose@alaska.net



My favorite bird

Harlequin Duck
Barry Bracken, Petersburg

This article is based on an interview with one of the many experienced birders in Juneau Audubon Society. If you'd like to be interviewed about one of your favorite birds, please contact Marge Hermans at marjorie.hermans@acsalaska.net

I like sea ducks, and Harlequins are my favorites. They're the one species we have in front of our house year-round, and they're great fun to watch. They spend a lot of time on the rocks resting, while other ducks like surf scoters and mergansers are out bobbing on the waves.

Except for information gathered in the aftermath of the oil spill in Prince William Sound, Harlequins are probably one of the birds we have the least amount of information about. But we do know they live in some of the roughest waters on earth (some populations overwinter along the Aleutians), and they conserve energy by resting on land.

Harlequins remind me of the important link between marine and terrestrial environments—something that we all need to keep in mind. In Southeast, Harlequins go up into fast moving streams on the mainland to breed. The females stay up there for a long time—nearly a month to incubate their eggs and another month or so to rear the young. When we see the chicks back down in salt water it's September, and they're in full flight plumage.

Male Harlequins leave the freshwater environment and return to salt water after the eggs hatch. This cuts the freshwater population in half and probably leaves more food for the hens and chicks.

I love the compact size and outstanding coloration of Harlequin males. They really earn their name *Histrionicus histrionicus* (Latin for "stage player") and their nickname "rock clowns." They forage in rough, rocky surge areas that other birds can't tolerate. Up in fresh water, young birds even exercise by playing in the waterfalls. They have a higher mortality from this "whitewater rafting" than from predators.

Harlequins have adapted very well to a broad variety of feeding strategies. In streams they eat aquatic nymphs and sometimes salmon eggs in the lower reaches. In the marine environment they eat amphipods, and mollusks like small mussels and clams. They can feed in the most turbulent waters, and they're one of the few ducks able to pry limpets and chitins off rocks, using a little hook on their beaks that can get under the shells and pry them loose.

It's hard to confuse a male Harlequin with any other species of duck. Some people who come to visit think they're seeing wood ducks, but habitat alone would tell you these are Harlequins. Females and immatures are fairly nondescript and can be confused with female goldeneyes or buffleheads, but the presence of males is usually a dead giveaway.

In late summer we often see congregations of several hundred male Harlequins on rocky outcroppings in lower Stephens Passage. I assume these are birds that have come back from breeding areas and are going through their summer molt. They probably choose these resting areas for protection from predators during this vulnerable time.

Harlequins require a pristine marine environment as well as a pristine terrestrial one for breeding. They're a good reminder for us that little changes in one area can have a profound influence over a much broader area—that we need to take care of everything and keep everything in balance.





EAGLECHAT

To share sightings and chat about all things bird-related with 60+ like-minded local members, log onto <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Eaglechat> or e-mail Nina Mollett at ninam@alaska.net to get signed up.

Subject: Juneau birding

Late Nov weather here can be rather grim - wet, dark, and cold! Good birds are hard to find but there are some good spots. Eagle beach for wintering shore birds, Fish Creek and Mendenhall wetlands for ducks, Pt Luisa for wintering ducks, loons, grebes and any hiking into alpine areas (such as the trail up to the cross on Mt Roberts) may offer ptarmigan sightings.

Date: November 12

Subject: Swans

Swans are migrating through Juneau this morning. A family with three young gray ones were resting on the wetlands at the edge of the channel. The adults were very wary of me and my dog Nahanni despite being quite far away. Then three more adult swans circled the wetlands and landed with the family. I guess the temperature in the Yukon has finally dropped sufficiently to chase these birds south.

Date: November 12

Subject: Swans

I watched 16 swans, mostly adults with a few immature, at Ward Lake this morning (Ketchikan). My dog and I were the only ones on the trail, and they were aware — and wary — even at a significant distance.

Date: November 16

Subject: SPTO

A Spotted Towhee has been around the feeders in a North Douglas backyard for several days.

USFWS wetlands grants

Juneau & Gustavus are SE recipients

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will award \$2.6 million to two State of Alaska agencies for projects to protect coastal wetlands in Juneau, Palmer, and Gustavus and on Afognak Island.

Included in that is a \$553,000 grant to purchase private property at the head of the Boy Scout Trail near Eagle Beach.

The grants, awarded under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, will benefit more than 6,000 acres of wildlife habitat within or adjacent to State Game Refuges, State Parks and municipal parks. Financial partners in the projects include Ducks Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Great Land Trust, City and Borough of Juneau and The Nature Conservancy.

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants are awarded to the states through a competitive process. Established under the 1990 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, the program is funded from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels.

This year, the Service will award \$15.7 million for 21 projects in 15 states. It is notable, given the competitive nature of the program, that all 4 proposals submitted by the State of Alaska will be fully funded. Since 1990, the Service has awarded more than \$120 million in grants to 25 states and one U.S. territory under this program. To date, National Coastal Wetlands Grants have assisted the states in restoring or protecting a total of nearly 150,000 acres of wetlands.



FUN! ADVENTURE! TRAVEL!

Expand your world as you know it

National Audubon Board Elections

Brenda Wright, President

It's time to select a nominee as the Alaska/Hawaii/Guam representative to the National Audubon Board. This is a role vital to representing chapters on the national level. Each region gets to send one representative to the national board. We would like to hear if you are interested in a three-year term to this position.

Each chapter in our region (Alaska/Hawaii/Guam) can propose one nominee. A past Juneau chapter president, Amy Skilbred, is now our region's representative. The national board meets four times a year in various locations throughout the U.S. Please don't be inhibited by travel costs; the national board can support or defray those costs.

If you are interested in supporting Audubon, especially in providing our viewpoint on a national level, please contact Brenda Wright, president or any of the board members. We'll be happy to give more details on duties and expectations.

Become a student again

What UAS is offering

It's not too early to look beyond the holidays and think about a winter/spring class at UAS. Here are just a few of the possibilities. For more information see their web site at <http://www.uas.alaska.edu/>

BIOL 271 Ecology

Principles of ecology with emphasis on the organism, population, community, ecosystem and biome levels. Aspects of the physical environment. Field exercises in biological sampling and analyses.

BIOL 375 Current Topics: The Shape of Life

Readings and discussions on "The Shape of Life," coined after a recent text in evolutionary biology. Interaction of developmental biology, genetics, and evolutionary processes in evolution of animal form.

BIOL 401 Phycology

Survey of freshwater and marine algae; emphasis on Alaskan species.

BIOL 493 Physiology of Marine Organisms

Adaptation of marine animals to their environment. Environmental physiology.

BIOL 495 Behavioral Ecology Field Course

Research skills in behavioral ecology, current issues in the study of behavior.

ENVS 101 Introduction To Environmental Science

Atmospheric, hydrospheric, lithospheric, and oceanic systems that define the environment and interactions among them; energy as an environmental parameter; effects of physical systems on the biosphere.

ENVS 310 Geographic Information Systems

Relationship between spatial data and automated thematic mapping; basic use of Arc/Info GIS software.

ENVS 402 Limnology

Study of continental fresh water systems, focusing on physical, chemical, and biological features.

ENVS 493 ST: Snow Hydrology

Processes related to snow in mid-latitude areas and how it influences climate, biology, and chemistry. Snow formation in the atmosphere, accumulation and distribution, snowpack metamorphism, avalanche dynamics, snowmelt runoff and chemistry, techniques for measuring snow properties.

GEOL 271 Earth Materials

Identification of the major rock-forming, metal ore, carbonate and evaporite minerals and the rocks they form. Theoretical and practical aspects of crystallography, mineralogy and petrology.

GEOL 301 Geomorphology

Landforms and associated soils, including their features, processes, materials and development over time. Understanding interactions between human activities and landforms/soils.

ASTR 225 General Astronomy

Physical properties of astronomical bodies; earth-based and satellite observation of light, cosmic rays, meteors, stars, galaxies and other extraterrestrial phenomena.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Permits

The Juneau Chapter of the Audubon Society publishes these permit notices as a service to its members and encourages participation in the public review process. For more information on individual permits or comments call 1-800-478-2712 (Anchorage permits office). For possible permit violations in Southeast Alaska, call the Juneau office at 790-4490. Send your comments to: Regulatory Branch (1145b), P.O. Box 898, Anchorage, AK 99506-0898.

Even if the comment date has passed, you can still send your comments to the Division of Governmental Coordination. The State review period on 404 permits usually ends after the COE comment period closes (as a general rule you can add four days to the comment period). It is important that your concerns reference the Coastal Zone Management program (Section 307 (c)(3) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972) and the State Coastal management program (Alaska Statute Title 46). You may also comment on the State's Water Quality Certification (Section 401 of the Clean Water Act). Consistency guidelines for the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) on natural resources and habitats can be found in 6 AAC 80.040 to 6 AAC 80.120 and Water Quality standards can be found in 18 AAC 70. Please contact the Division of Governmental Coordination or the Department of Environmental Conservation for more information about applicable laws and project comment deadlines.

Division of Governmental Coordination
P.O. Box 110030
Juneau, AK 99811-0300
(907) 465-3562

Department of Environmental Conservation
410 Willoughby Ave.
Juneau, AK 99801-1795
(907) 465-5260

For additional information on regulations and guidelines for fill and dredge activity in marine waters and wetlands see the following: Section 10 of Rivers and Harbors Act 1899 (33 U.S.C. 403) - Placement of structures in waters of the United States; Section 404 and 404 (b) of the Clean Water Act (40 CFR 230) - Discharge of fill or dredged material into the waters of the United States; Section 103 Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (33 U.S.C. 1413) - Transport of dredge material for the purpose of dumping in marine waters. If you need help on commenting or technical assistance, you can call Chris Kent at 463-3494.

Juneau — Mendenhall River 49, (Reference Number M-1998-0008) Applicant: Montana Creek Development Company. Location: Montana Creek Subdivision III, Track II. Proposal: The applicant proposes to construct 36 home sites. In the process of creating building pads the applicant will fill 0.21 acres of forested and scrub wetlands. This application will reauthorize a previous Corps permit (4-1998-008) that expired on August 3, 2001. Purpose: Allow the applicant to complete the residential subdivision. Mitigation: Applicant is leaving a greenbelt around the Category B wetlands identified in the Juneau Wetland management plan which is located in the center of the subdivision. Comments due: **December 3, 2002**.

Juneau — Favorite Channel 43, (Reference Number M-1996-0019) Applicant: City and Borough of Juneau. Location: South Lena Loop Road. Proposal: The applicant proposes to place 15,145 cubic yards of fill into 5.78 acres of forested wetlands for the construction of twenty four 84-foot long by 84-foot wide house pads, seventeen driveways (approximately 20 to 40-foot long by 16-foot wide) and ten driveways 80 to 120 feet long by 16-feet wide. In addition, the proposed project would include the placement of an 400-foot long outfall line within Favorite Channel. Purpose: To create a 48-lot residential subdivision. Mitigation: The applicant will preserve a 54-acre greenbelt adjacent to Picnic Creek, northeast of the project area. The applicant will also have seasonal work restraints around three Bald Eagle nests and secondary treatment of wastewater prior to discharge. Comments due: **December 2, 2002**.

Sitka — Jamestown Bay 0049, (Reference Number 4-2002-0025) Applicant: Michael Knauss. Location: 1715 Sawmill Creek Road. Proposal: The applicant proposes to discharge 200 cubic yards of rip rap and 360 cubic yards of shot rock into 1280 square feet of intertidal habitat. An additional 180 cubic yards of fill will be discharged above the high tide line. The project will excavate 120 cubic yards of native beach gravel below mean high water. Purpose: To create a parking lot. Comments due: **November 24, 2002**.

Ketchikan — Tongass Narrows 549, (Reference Number 4-2002-0993) Applicant: Chris Biagi. Location: Collins Court, lot 9F. Proposal: The applicant proposes to discharge 2,000 cubic yards of shot rock into 9,200 square feet (0.21 acres) of forested wetlands and create a stream crossing that will impact 0.02 acres of stream channel. The applicant will deepen the stream on the western edge of the property to improve drainage. Mitigation: None. Purpose: Construct a private residence. Comments due: **November 27, 2002**.

Ketchikan — George Inlet 19, (Reference Number M-1974-0312) Applicant: Patricia Shaughnessy. Location: George Inlet Lodge, 11728 South Tongass Highway (13 miles from Ketchikan). Proposal: The applicant proposes to expand an existing dock facility by adding a “L” shaped float 160-feet by 16-feet by 20-feet. The dock would be anchored by six 2,000 lb. concrete anchors. Purpose: Expand the current dock to accommodate traffic. No mitigation is planned. Comments due: **December 9, 2002**.

Ketchikan — Behm Canal 72, (Reference Number 1-2002-0703) **AFTER-THE-FACT**. Applicant: Lawrence Carson. Location: Rudyard Isle Bite on Behm Canal near Princess Bay. Proposal: The applicant request to maintain a 50-foot long 3-log boom-stick float anchored to land with steel cable attached to rock. Purpose: Moorage for logs, vessels and equipment associated with on-going log salvage. No mitigation is planned. Comments due: **December 6, 2002**.

Ketchikan — Clarence Strait 94, (Reference Number 4-2002-1110) Applicant: Tiff Vincent. Location: Clarence Straits Subdivision Lot 2, near Coffman Cove. Proposal: The applicant proposes to discharge 580 cubic yards of fill into 0.17 acres of muskeg and forested wetlands. Purpose: To construct a private residence and driveway. Mitigation: None. Comments due: **December 12, 2002**.



Help for city birds

For most people, birds represent their most frequent contact with wildlife. And urban areas often have habitat critical to migrating birds.

One of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s newest programs, the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds, is a grant and outreach program designed to address a sometimes overlooked area of bird conservation — the need to work with cities to preserve habitat and educate citizens about birds in an urban environment.

When cities sign onto the program, USFWS provides technical assistance and challenge grants ranging from \$10,00 to \$150,000. The treaty city develops and implements bird conservation projects, provides matching dollars and in-kind support and develops further partnerships.

Currently, New Orleans and Chicago are signed on. Future participating cities include Philadelphia, Anchorage and Houston. Audubon chapters including the Orleans Audubon Society, Audubon Chicago, Anchorage Audubon Society, and Houston Audubon Society have been key participants in their respective cities. To learn more visit <http://birds.fws.gov/urbantreaty.html>.

Speakers wanted (Maybe you!)

Is there a topic you’d like to hear more about? Do you know someone (maybe you!) who traveled and has an interesting story to share? Do you know someone who will be traveling to Juneau who could present an interesting program? We’d like to hear your suggestions for monthly programs, which are scheduled the second Thursday of each month, September through May. Our monthly meetings are a focal point of our chapter activities, and we’d like to appeal to a wide spectrum of interests. Please contact Brenda Wright or any board member with your suggestions.

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) in the U.S. has launched a new website <http://www.nabci-us.org/>. Visit the site to learn more about NABCI efforts in the U.S., the various bird conservation plans and how you can get involved.



Sara Lou McDaniel

To help save paper and chapter money, send an e-mail to kingfarm@ptialaska.net to request the Raven in either rich text (read by most word processing programs) or Adobe Acrobat. If you have Acrobat Reader, you can receive the Raven in a format that looks just like the print version but with occasional touches of color. Rich text versions will not contain graphics. To change your newsletter from rich text to Adobe Acrobat, contact upclose@alaska.net.

Juneau Audubon Society has members in Coffman Cove, Craig, Funter Bay, Gustavus, Haines, Hydaburg, Juneau, Ketchikan, Pelican, Petersburg, Sitka, Skagway, Tenakee Springs, Thorne Bay, Ward Cove, Wrangell

Every membership supports Audubon's vital efforts to protect birds, wildlife and natural habitats. As a member, you will become an important part of our chapter and receive a host of benefits including:

- A one-year subscription (9 issues) of our chapter newsletter, *The Raven*
- Automatic membership in National Audubon Society and a one-year subscription to the award-winning Audubon magazine.

Audubon Society Membership Application

_____ \$20 (1-year introductory rate) _____ \$15 (1-year student/senior rate)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zipcode _____

Telephone number _____

____ My check for \$ _____ is enclosed _____ Please bill me

Mail to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, P.O. Box 51001,
Boulder, CO 80322-1001

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7XCH

*If you prefer to just support Juneau Audubon Society, fill out the form above and send with \$10 to:
Juneau Audubon Society, P.O. Box 021725, Juneau, AK 99802, Attn.: membership*

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