

# 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>

**Volume 30, Number 5**

**Juneau Audubon Society**

**January 2004**

## **Monthly Membership Meeting**

Thursday, January 8, 7:30 p.m.

Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School Library

## **Millipedes to Murrelets— new opportunities for research in Southeast Alaska**

**Matt Kirchhoff**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has received funding from Congress to expand survey, monitoring, and research activities to include the world of nongame—any species that is not hunted, trapped, or fished. Matt Kirchhoff, nongame biologist for Southeast Alaska, will show slides describing some of the project ideas the Department has so far received from agencies, universities, and nonprofit organizations like Juneau Audubon. Ideas have been intriguing, from proposed surveys of slugs, earthworms, and dragonflies, to research on the biology of birds and bats. Your response to the proposed project ideas, as well as any new ideas, will be welcomed.

## **2003 Juneau Christmas Bird Count Results**

**Mark Schwan**

Juneau's Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 14. Twenty-four volunteers enjoyed a brisk but otherwise fine day for birding. Sixty-three species and just over 9,000 birds were seen during the day. The day's list was marked by rather low numbers of some of our more common waterfowl, and overall diversity of species was down compared to many years. This was likely due to the early arrival of winter this year, but also our birding party sizes were small and coverage in some areas was below optimum. I heard from several people that holding the count on Sunday precluded them from participating. Finally, the count was conducted when hunting season was still in progress, which likely displaced birds from the refuge wetlands. These are all things to consider for next year. On the other hand, because of Alan and Ann Doty's offer to take a group on their boat to outer Auke Bay, an area was covered that is almost always missed. Seven species of birds were seen that would have otherwise gone uncounted.

## **Worth looking forward to:**

### **Great Backyard Birdcount**

**Feb. 13-16**

<http://www.birdsource.org>

### **Berners Bay Cruises**

**April 17**

**May 1**

*See future Ravens for details.*

The 23 common species seen on all previous 30 counts were seen again; these include mostly waterfowl that over-winter here, along with our familiar resident species. New high counts were obtained for only one species: Surfbird. The best bird of the day was a lingering Yellow-rumped Warbler, found by Steve Zimmerman; this species has only been recorded on one previous local count day, and one other time as a Count Week (CW) bird. A Black-capped Chickadee was seen two days before the count day and therefore can be listed as a CW species, as can Bonaparte's Gull, as Larry Edfelt saw 10 on the last day new species could be added. There were six other species seen during the remaining days of the Count Week but which were missed on Count day. See full count at <http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org>

The potluck after the day's birding activities was great; thanks to everyone for their generous contributions. Also, thanks to Gus van Vliet for conducting the evening tally, collecting the participant fees, and reviewing a draft of the results, and thanks to all those who participated on the count; it was a fine day.

***For CBC results from other communities, see future issues of the Raven.***

## **Perspective from the National Board**

**Amy Skilbred**

As I leave the National Audubon board, I reflect on six years of exciting and interesting times and tremendous change at Audubon. Audubon has streamlined and is focused on implementing its strategic plan. Audubon has gone from regional offices, TV programs and books (all of which were superb, but kept National Audubon removed from its members) to state offices in 26 states and a thriving centers program that is educating our children. Audubon is driven by a positive vision for our future. Its citizen science program engages thousands, and grassroots activists are growing in numbers and influence.

As Audubon shifted resources toward opening state offices and centers, the focus was intense, as it needed to be to bring our ambitious strategic plan to fruition. As we look forward to more state offices and centers across the country, this focus continues to engage Audubon resources. During this transition, several national board members continued to promote public policy, chapters, and science to senior staff and other board members. Audubon has not forgotten them. In the past two years, Audubon's focus on citizen science, Important Bird Areas, grassroots activists, and the critical roles played by chapters has increased and become more defined.

The board is now giving its attention to the relationship between chapters and the national organization through an *Ad Hoc* Chapter Committee. The committee's objective is to find ways to better align the work of Audubon chapters, state offices and national programs around shared conservation goals. Over the past several months the committee has engaged Audubon chapters in a dialogue about areas of concern to chapters so that Audubon and our conservation mission is strengthened. The committee has contacted chapters through letters, meetings, the internet, and telephone and welcomes additional ideas and concerns. Some of the priority issues for chapters that have come to light from these exchanges are: organizational communications, financial relationships between chapters and national, and how chapters fit with state offices and new local Audubon centers. The work of this committee will extend into 2004 and its recommendations incorporated in the 2005 Audubon budget process.

Audubon is attempting to develop a new model for national and state organizations working with chapters, and we are looking for your help, guidance and input. I urge you to assist by thinking about the issues raised and communicating your thoughts to Lynn Tennefloss and the committee at [ltennefloss@audubon.org](mailto:ltennefloss@audubon.org). The work of this committee can only be as good as the input from all chapters.

September was my last National Audubon board meeting. Alaska will be capably represented at future board meetings by Steve Zimmerman, who is from Juneau. Steve was recently elected by the chapters in this region and will begin his duties at the January board meeting.

## **From the Conservation Chair**

**Sari Saunders**

Below are sites to check for information on a few issues of recent concern. Questions, comments or information to contribute? Contact Sari Saunders at [conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org).

### **Switzer Creek Wetlands (behind Kmart building)**

Still no confirmed movement (after contact with the Corps) on consideration of permits for development of this land or nearby properties, though rumors abound. Good sites to check for information on this or development of other wetlands include:

- Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) public notice site (N.B. last updated 06/27/03): <http://www.gov.state.ak.us/dgc/PublicNotices/PNsearch.html>
- For general info, try the DNR's ACMP site at <http://www.alaskacoast.state.ak.us/>
- Army Corps of Engineers Public Notices (also good for general information on permitting requirements when development will involve wetlands or navigable waters) <http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/default.htm>

### **Mendenhall River Wetlands (site of proposed new high school)**

See permit application materials on Army Corps of Engineers site (above); applicant is CBJ. Comments can be submitted to the Corps until Dec. 23 '03

## **Juneau Second Crossing**

Check for updates on development of options for a second bridge over Gastineau Channel at <http://secondcrossing.alaska.gov> You can also email Sam Kito, professional engineer and Transportation and Development Manager for CBJ, at [sam\\_kito@ci.juneau.ak.us](mailto:sam_kito@ci.juneau.ak.us) (ph. 586-0753).

## **Juneau Access Initiative**

Refer to the website of the Alaska Department of Transportation. Here you can look at the Draft EIS (completed 1997) and its reevaluation (Jan. '03). Many of you have received the recent newsletter on alternatives, studies, and schedules. Supplemental DEIS (deemed needed after the reevaluation of the original EIS) is expected in June '04.

[http://www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/projectinfo/ser/juneau\\_access/index.htm](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/projectinfo/ser/juneau_access/index.htm)

## **Greens Creek Tailings Disposal**

You can read the Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) at <http://www.greenscreekeis.com/>. The Forest Supervisor signed off on Alternative C, which allows expansion of the tailings facility and requires carbon additions to the tailings for the purpose of long-term chemical stability and maintenance of water quality.

# My favorite bird

## **Greater Yellowlegs**

**Steve Zimmerman, Juneau**

*From an interview with Marge Hermans*

I'm not sure I have a favorite bird, but the Greater Yellowlegs is one bird that I always look for because to me it signifies the arrival of spring. We live on the shores of Gastineau Channel, and I've tracked Greater Yellowlegs there for about a dozen years. The earliest I've seen them arrive is April 3; the latest is April 18.

I often hear them when the tide is out on the wetlands. Their voice is a strong, rapid *tew-tew-tew*. It's one of the more common sounds on the wetlands, and stands out above the sounds of other birds.

Greater Yellowlegs eat primarily fish, and you'll often see them feeding along the beach or in wetland ponds. They have long legs, and they can wade out into fairly deep water. Often when they're feeding they'll turn their heads back and forth, perhaps as a way of finding food. They can run fast enough to catch a fish, and sometimes you'll see them do that, too.

It's not difficult to tell Greater Yellowlegs from other shore birds. Their bright yellow legs can be seen in almost any light. What's more challenging is to tell Greater Yellowlegs from Lesser. It's hard to see the difference in size if they're not standing side by side, but the Greater Yellowlegs has a longer, stronger bill about one and a half times its head width. The bill is also slightly upturned, and the bird has more barring on its sides. The Lesser Yellowlegs has a thinner, pointy, pin-like bill about the same length as width of its head.

Greater Yellowlegs vigorously defend their nesting area, which is often in a muskeg. They'll often stand in the top of a tree and give their loud, strident *tew-tew-tew* call over and over and over again. I've heard that along the road up to Eaglecrest. I would try not to disturb them, but I've read if you get close to their eggs they will dive-bomb you.

In winter Greater Yellowlegs migrate south, traveling over a fairly broad area, typically to California or parts of South America. We don't usually see them much after October, but last winter one did overwinter here. It was seen between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of January, and there were other reports in February and March—a very rare sighting for our region. Look for yellowlegs feeding in the float plane ponds along the airport Dike Trail, or in sloughs around the gazebo

*If you'd like us to feature one of your favorite birds, please contact Marge Hermans at [marjorie.hermans@acsalaska.net](mailto:marjorie.hermans@acsalaska.net) to set up an interview.*

To get all your chapter news on line, send an e-mail to [education@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:education@juneau-audubon-society.org)

Each membership supports Audubon's efforts to protect birds, wildlife and natural habitats. As a national member, you will become a vital part of our chapter and receive Audubon magazine and our Raven newsletter.

### National Audubon Society Membership Application

For first time members or renewals to the National Audubon Society please mail this form to:  
National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 51001, Boulder, CO 80322-1001

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20 (1-year introductory rate) \_\_\_\_\_ \$15 (1-year student/senior rate) \_\_\_\_\_ \$35 basic renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ My check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Please bill me

To support Juneau Audubon Society only, send the completed form and \$10 to

Membership Chair, PO Box 21725, Juneau, AK 99802

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10 (You will receive 9 months of The Raven newsletter).

I prefer : \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail Raven \_\_\_\_\_ paper Raven A51  
7XCH

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