

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 8

Juneau Audubon Society

April 2004

BERNERS BAY NATURAL HISTORY LECTURE SERIES

The Juneau Audubon Society will present a series of lectures on the natural history, culture, and ecology of Berners Bay in addition to the annual spring cruises to Berners Bay. Lectures are free.

Here Come the Hooligan: Springtime in Berners Bay
Jamie Womble

April 8, 2004 7:30 pm @ Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School Library

Berners Bay: History, Culture, Ecology, and Recreation
John Hudson

April 23, 2004 7:00 pm @ Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center



The Birds of Berners Bay
Brian Marston

April 30, 2004 7:00 pm @ Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center



Audubon Spring Wildlife Cruises to Berners Bay

April 17, 2004 8:30 am

May 1, 2004 @ 8:30 am and 1:30 pm

\$35/adult; \$5/children cruises depart from Auke Bay Harbor

Tickets may be purchased at Hearthside Books

SPECIAL NOTE: May Audubon Meeting and Program: May 1 UAS Lecture Hall 7-8 pm Social 8:15-9 pm

The May meeting and Program (a talk and slide show by noted Author and Lecturer, Richard Nelson) will take place on Saturday, May 1st, in the Lecture Hall in the new classroom wing at UAS (ground floor, next to the library). **THIS EVENT WILL REPLACE THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MAY MEETING ON MAY 13th**, and will be the last meeting before we break for the summer. Check elsewhere in this newsletter, or on the web, for information regarding the May 1st event, as well as other Juneau Audubon activities surrounding Berner's Bay.

Notes from the Board, March 2004

Brenda Wright, President Juneau Audubon

Its definitely time to be gearing up for spring. Our field trips schedule is looking great (thanks to Steve Zimmerman and all the leaders). We have two great cruises lined up to enjoy the bird and wildlife marvels at Berners Bay on April 17 and May 1 (tickets available at Hearthside Books). And last but not least, 3 exciting lectures centered on the natural history in and around the eulachon run in Berners Bay. The lectures are 4/8 at our scheduled public meeting and 4/23 and 4/30 at the Glacier visitor center at 7pm. We sure hope you can join us for some or all of these fun activities.

We get interesting e-mails from people who will be visiting Juneau on the cruise ships. There has been an increase in requests for locally guided bird walks. If you know any one who might be interested, or already has a business in guided walks, please have them contact the board.

I want to share with you some other news from our Canadian neighbor on an initiative to protect and manage birds in the boreal forest. Just this past winter, the Boreal Conservation Framework proposed a new approach to balancing conservation and economic development: the establishment of a network of large interconnected protected areas. Of the 298 bird species that have some of their breeding grounds in the boreal forest, at least 40 species of land birds and several species of ducks are already experiencing population declines in part due to habitat loss from logging and oil and gas development. For more information on how you can help protect the boreal forest, please go to the Boreal Songbird Initiative website at www.borealbirds.org.

For those of you thinking of checking out birding sites in other locations, I have some information I'd love to share from Verde Valley: Birding and nature festival April 22-25 and Crane Watch 2004 in Kearney, NB.

Please let us know if we can entice you to volunteer for a committee, a board seat, or have a program you'd like to present.

Clips from the Conservation Committee (Sari Saunders):

The Conservation Committee welcomes involvement from all members. Let us know what interests and concerns you in Juneau and around Southeast. Comments? Contact the chair, Sari Saunders, at conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org or any other Board member.

1. Kensington Mine Gold Project. The date has been extended to **April 7th 2004** for submission of comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for Coeur Alaska's

Kensington Mine Gold Project. You can still read, download, or request a paper copy of the DSEIS at www.kensingtoneis.com (or contact the Juneau Ranger District of the US Forest Service). Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) has highlighted some of the salient details of the “preferred” Alternative development option on their website (<http://www.seacc.org/TakeAction/Kensington.htm>).

Juneau Audubon submitted comments that emphasized concerns regarding the special nature of avian and wildlife communities, and the complex of habitats provided in the Berner’s Bay region. We noted deficiencies in the analysis of the DSEIS with regard to post-development monitoring plans, fragmentation of terrestrial habitat, cumulative impacts of other developments in the region, and use of indicator species. We also noted the important role of Berner’s Bay to groups like Audubon for education and tour purposes. If you would like to see a copy of the letter, please contact Sari.

Send your comments on this document to:

Steve Hohensee
SEIS Team Leader
Tongass Minerals Group
8465 Old Dairy Rd
Juneau, AK
shohensee@fs.fed.us

2. Spring Birds – watch your glass! A recent Associated Press article interviews an ornithologist from Muhlenberg College, PA who estimates that collisions with glass kill up to 1 billion birds a year in the U.S. alone. Scientists for the National Audubon Society are starting to take more careful note of the issue. In newer structures, architects are starting to use glass with patterns, so windows are not completely clear. Food for thought as birds start migrating back to the area and you begin your spring cleaning. For more information on what you can do around your home to minimize bird strikes, go to http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwd/articles/bwd00/ja00/window_strikes.html

3. Permit applications to Corps

a. Highway improvement. There is a new permit application by the Dept. of Transportation to the Corps of Engineers requesting permission to place fill below the high tide line and into wetlands of Favourite Channel. The project is associated with highway improvement. See posting POA-2004-184-4.pdf at <http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/default.htm>. Interested or concerned persons can submit comments by **April 15th 2004** to the Corps at the letterhead address on the public notice or to Mr. Randal P. Vigil at randal.p.vigil@poa02.usace.army.mil.

b. Development of freight facilities on Channel Drive. This permit application by Salmon Creek Development proposes to dump rip-rap and non-organic soil material (?) into about 0.09 acre of the intertidal zone. The purpose is to increase yard space for freight operations. Specifically, an existing launch ramp would be filled to match surface grade of the existing work pad. Installation of an oil-water separator is specifically mentioned in the proposal. Comments are due by **April 15th** as above.

c. Spuhn Island Development. Spuhn Island is the small island that sits directly in front of you when you are standing at the end of Fritz Cove Road. About 2/3rds of the island was privately owned, and was recently sold to a developer who plans to develop 63 residential lots on the island, including 3,472 feet of 10’ wide road for utilities and vehicular access. The fill would be discharged on uplands, wetlands, and in U.S. waters.

A development of this magnitude anywhere would have impacts, but these potential problems are magnified by the fact that this development is on an island. Everything must come and go by boat. How will up to 63 households get on and off the island to commute to work, and where they’ll park their boats and cars on either end? How will sewage and garbage produced on the island be treated or transported? How will fuel be transported, and what contingencies are there for chronic oil spills? How will the

development affect waterbirds and land birds that use of the area, including nesting eagles? These are the kinds of questions the Corp of Engineers and the City Planning Department should be able to answer satisfactorily before the clearcutting and roading begins.

If you'd like to comment, the application can be viewed at

http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/PN_Scanned/March/POA-2003-1473-4.pdf

For more information, contact John C. Leeds at 907-790-4490, or by E-Mail at john.c.leeds@poa02.usace.army.mil. Comments are due April 23rd.

Spring Migration Bird Trips & Nature Walks 2004

Walks last about two to four hours. If you have them, bring binoculars and/or spotting scope, bird guide, rubber boots recommended for most walks and dress for weather. Beginning birders are welcome. For further information contact Steve Zimmerman 586-2597, field-trips@juneau-audubon-society.org

April 10 Fish Creek

8:00 a.m. Meet at the parking lot just before Fish Creek at 8.3 Mile North Douglas Highway
Leader: Paul Suchanek

April 17 Berners Bay Cruise

8:30 a.m. Note: The Berners Bay cruises will be leaving from the Don Statter Harbor in Auke Bay (located below DeHarts Store). Look for the Allen Marine vessel. Boarding 15 minutes before departure

April 24 Point Bridget Trail (Three miles to beach)

8:00 a.m. Meet at the Pt. Bridget State Park trailhead Mile 38 Glacier Highway
Leader: Paul Suchanek

May 1 Berners Bay Cruises

8:30 a.m. Note: The Berners Bay cruises will be leaving from the Don Statter Harbor in Auke Bay (located below DeHarts Store). Look for the Allen Marine vessel. Boarding 15 minutes before departure
1:30 p.m.

May 8 Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge

9 a.m. Meet at parking lot end of Radcliffe Rd
Leader: Bob Armstrong

May 15 Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge

7:00 a.m. Meet at parking lot end of Radcliffe Rd
Leader: Steve Zimmerman

May 22 Native Plants and Birds—South Bridget Cove

10:00 a.m. Meet at turnout Mile 37.4 South Bridget Cove
Leaders: Mary Lou King and Pat Harris

May 29 Norton Lake

7:00 a.m. Meet at second parking lot Mendenhall Glacier (Moraine Trailhead)
Leader: Deanna MacPhail (Rubber boots recommended)

June 5 Dredge Lakes

7:00 a.m. Meet at parking lot at Back Loop Bridge
Leader: Mark Schwan

June 12 **Amalga Marsh on the Amalga Trail (Eagle River)**
8:00 a.m. Meet at parking lot just across the Eagle River Bridge Mile 27.9 Glacier Hwy.
Leader: Gus VanVliet

My Favorite Bird – Yellow-billed Loon – Laurie Lamm, Juneau from an interview with Marge Hermans

It's always hard to pick a favorite bird, but I would choose the Yellow-billed Loon. I've always liked loons, maybe because I grew up in Minnesota, where the state bird is the Common Loon.

What I like about the yellow-billed is that every time I see it—which is not very often—it catches me off guard. It surprises me—like getting an unexpected gift.

I've seen Yellow-billed Loons out on the water—from ferries and a smaller boat—near Auke Bay, and in the Haines and Skagway area. Yellow-billed Loons look almost exactly like Common Loons, but their bill is straw yellow instead of dark, and they hold the tip of the bill up at a higher angle. It's the pale bill that sets them off. Once you see that, you know the bird can be nothing else.

It says in the literature that we're more likely to see Yellow-billed Loons here in the winter, but I've usually seen them around May or June, which is when I'm out on the water. When you're on a boat, you get a pretty quick view. You can't really sit and observe the birds. You just see them, and usually they dive down.

The first time I saw one, I was working for a local tour operator. We had just left Auke Bay to go on a tour out around Shelter Island. I was about to point out Admiralty Island and just as I turned to look out the front window, I saw a Yellow-billed Loon. I was so surprised I gasped—and everyone on the boat stood up. “Oh!” I said. “It's a Yellow-billed Loon!” Almost simultaneously, everyone on the boat sat down. I don't think there was a birder in the group. I guess a Yellow-billed Loon was not that exciting for people hoping to see whales—but it was very exciting to me!

Yellow-billed Loons are pretty much a coastal bird. The *Birder's Handbook* says they are found in “small numbers and limited breeding habitat in North America.” It sounds as if they leave Southeast in summer to go to their breeding grounds. So seeing them is kind of the luck of the draw and keeping your eyes open. Some people might see them from shore in the winter, but they probably stay farther away from shore in spring or summer. You might need a spotting scope to see enough detail to identify them.

One reference I read said the call of the Yellow-billed Loon is a lot like that of the Common Loon. When I listened to a short recording of the call, though, I didn't think it sounded so much like a Common Loon. It sounded to me like a bird trying to be a wolf! Unfortunately, I haven't heard it in the wild yet, since I've been inside a large boat on the few occasions when I've been lucky enough to see one of these fascinating birds.

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

To get all your chapter news on line, send an email to education@juneau-audubon-society.org 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 raven@juneau-audubon-society.org. NOTE: if you are using an e-mail address at your workplace, please insure you are able to receive mail that is not work-related or send us a home e-mail address.

national member, you will become an important part of our chapter and receive the 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) _____ \$30 Basic renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zipcode _____

Telephone number _____

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

If you prefer to support Juneau Audubon Society only, send the completed form and \$10 to Membership Chair, PO Box 21725, Juneau, AK 99802

_____ \$10 (1 year Juneau Audubon Society Chapter dues) You will receive 9 months of the Juneau Audubon Society newsletter the Raven.

Please let us know if you prefer electronic _____ e-mail
or paper copy _____

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