

# 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>

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## Aurora's of the Alaska Range...a Photographic Journey by Norio Matsumoto

Thursday, November 11,  
7:30-8:30 PM  
UAS Egan Auditorium

Come see the breath-taking slide images and video of Japanese nature photographer, Norio Matsumoto. Norio will be in Juneau briefly as he prepares for his next photographic expedition to the Alaska Range.

Each winter, Norio spends months camped on glaciers in the heart of the Alaska Range, enduring frigid temperatures, winter storms, and isolation...all in pursuit of the "perfect" photo. His very survival requires meticulous planning, amazing patience, and impressive determination. The rewards are in his stunning photography.

There is one showing only, and seating is limited, so mark your calendars and come early. You will not be disappointed!

This free presentation is part of Juneau Audubon's "**Celebrate Nature**" series.

**BOARD NEWS** by Brenda Wright, Juneau Audubon Society president

November!

This month we prepare our goodies for the public market, one of our two major fundraisers for the year. Time to make jam, create some crafts, and volunteer to help at our booth. It's a fun way to see many of your friends and help support Juneau Audubon during Thanksgiving Day weekend. If you can volunteer to help, please contact any board member or Ellen Anderson, booth coordinator, at 789-1412.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, have you heard of the Thanksgiving Day bird count? No, not the cooked one in the oven. This is a simple bird count that only lasts for one hour and is confined to a circle of only 15 feet! This is the kind of bird count I do as I sit by my window and visit with friends and family. It is organized by Humboldt State University and the information is collected from all western states. You can pick any one hour period on Thanksgiving Day. Give it a try, it is simple and easy. The form is available on Page 7, at the public lecture, and on the Juneau web page.

Your local Juneau Audubon web page has a local bird checklist, lecture schedules, and past newsletters ([www.juneau-audubon-society.org/](http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org/)).

## **BEARS, FRUITS, AND BEAR GARDENS** By Mary F. Willson

If you walk up the old logging roads in the Neka Valley south of Hoonah on Chichagof Island, one of the first things you (as an observant naturalist) might notice along the edge of the road are small clusters of tiny plants that look like salmonberry or wild black currants. Every so often there might be a cluster with miniature devil's club leaves. If you take this walk in late summer, you'd probably also find deposits full of seeds of blueberry, currant, salmonberry, devil's club, and maybe some of watermelon berry, elderberry, or highbush cranberry, often along with some whole berries and even leaves. Making the obvious connections, you'd deduce that the clusters of tiny plants probably came from the deposits full of seeds. Those deposits sometimes have fish bones (and tapeworms!) too, but the majority of the deposited material in late summer and early fall is derived from fruits of the forest. Bears like to use these old logging roads, and a single stretch of road might accumulate a few thousand scats in one season. The little clusters of young plants we call "bear gardens".

The fruits have been designed by evolution to be consumed by vertebrates, which digest the fruit pulp (most of it, anyway) and evacuate the seeds, either by defecation or regurgitation. While the seeds are in the vertebrate digestive tract, they are moved about the landscape before being deposited at some distance from the parent plant. In other forests, many studies have shown that seeds carried away from the parent plant are more likely to survive, germinate, and grow than are those deposited near the parent. So, in general, dispersal of seeds is advantageous. In some cases, just a few seeds are carried really far, but these can be very important in colonizing new areas (or areas devastated by fire, opened up by landslides, or torn up by logging operations).

Many kinds of vertebrates perform this service of seed dispersal for the plants in return for a lunch of sweet or oily fruits. Birds are regular seed dispersal agents, including waxwings, thrushes, some warblers, crows and ravens. But here in Southeast Alaska, bears may be at least as important as birds in carrying seeds around the countryside. Bears eat lots of fruits, even during the salmon season. They deposit lots of seeds (as many as 5000-10,000/scat) with a nice load of manure. And they often carry seeds a considerable distance. And on top of all that, bears are very numerous on our landscapes.

Several aspects of the mutualistic relationship between brown bears and forest fruits have been explored by colleagues and students associated with me. A post-doctoral colleague (Anna Traveset) and a student (Teresa Bermejo) from Spain found that germination by bear-passed seeds was usually pretty good, that manure composition affected seed germination and seedling growth (scats with animal bones were best—probably a source of minerals), and that high concentrations of seeds in bear scats could lead to secondary scattering of seeds by seed-hunting rodents. A graduate student (Laura Patten) determined how long seeds stayed in bear digestive tracts (just a few hours) and combined that information with data on hourly monitoring of movements of brown bears carrying ADF&G radio collars, in order to estimate that bears could carry seeds an average of about 650-1000 yards, but sometimes 1.5 miles or more. Although some of these seeds would be deposited in places unsuitable for germination or growth, many would land in potentially good sites. From the plants' perspective, the process is a bit like a lottery—they have to produce a lot of seeds to ensure that some of them will be successful.

From the bears' perspective, the fruit crop constitutes a food resource of major importance. In most of Southeast Alaska, fruits and salmon both contribute to the process of putting on fat for hibernation. But some bears are reported (by ADF&G) to spend the whole year in the alpine zone, where fruits may be the main source of food in fall. Bears in their winter dens live off the fat deposited in fall, and female bears depend on that fat for energy to nurse the winter-born cubs. When the berry crops fail, many cubs may die young.

Thus, the relationship between bears and fruiting plants is reciprocal – both parties gain something important from the interaction. Clearly, the interaction is ecologically significant to the landscape and wildlife of Southeast Alaska.

### **From Petersburg By Don Cornelius**

The tawny fluff-ball of a cat sat placidly in the live trap I had borrowed from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Nuts, I thought, I had caught Eddie, one of my neighbor's three cats. Several years ago, when he was leaner and younger, Eddie used to vault clear to the top of my bird feeder until I ringed it with nails to stop that trick. This day he fell for a can of tuna in the live-trap under the deck.

I packed Eddie home and explained that he and his two companions were frequent visitors to my feeder. Any help would be much appreciated. They were sympathetic, but “when Eddie and his companions are kept indoors, they go ballistic.” So, back home I searched the internet and came up with a website for CatStop at [www.catgoods.com](http://www.catgoods.com). CatStop is a bib that attaches to a cats collar and reportedly keeps it from catching birds. I presume it prevents the cat from snatching the birds in midair with it's paws. I offered to buy one for each of my neighbors cats, but they refused my offer—they would buy the \$7.95 bibs themselves. They ordered them that day and now Eddie and his house mates are the most bizarre looking cats in the neighborhood. Fortunately, the bibs don't seem to bother the cats. I don't know how successful they are -- once when visiting another neighbor I heard a clunk on the window as a Savannah sparrow struck the full-length pane. As the sparrow struggled to hop into a nearby bush, Eddie leaped on the porch like someone had struck a dinner bell. Fortunately a wrap on the window chased Eddie off, but I wondered if he has simply modified his technique to take advantage of another pitfall facing our neighborhood birds.

As I write this I wonder if feeding birds, thus drawing them into communities with cats and windows, is a selfish idea. Does my daily pleasure take a toll on our avian friends?

Has anyone else has had any experience with the CatStop bibs? I've considered ordering up a bunch to donate to our local Humane Association—to be distributed with cats that are adopted through them. But, maybe there are better alternatives. Certainly the internet offers lots of suggestions, but what really works besides keeping cats indoors—which many cat owners don't want to do? If anyone has any ideas, e-mail me at [doncorn@gci.net](mailto:doncorn@gci.net) and I'll pass them along.

### **Report From Haines By Georgia Giacobbe**

The birds have been active this October in Haines. I was given third party reports of trumpeter and tundra swan at Mosquito Lake. My husband witnessed a flock of approximately 100 snow buntings flying by at 2.5 mile on Haines Highway earlier in the month. A drive out to Mud Bay on Saturday the 23rd revealed about three to four buffleheads, about six common loons, and several other diving ducks (binoculars were not strong enough for me to make a good identification). And now the eagle update—as of Saturday the 23rd the eagles were spread out along the Chilkat River from the McClellan Flats past Klukwan. A couple were spotted at the Tsirku where Clear Creek empties into the river. The largest concentration seemed to be north of the Council Grounds at 19 mile and below Klukwan, too numerous to accurately count. They were competing with the late Canadian fisherman. Hopefully the number of eagles won't pass their peak before the Bald Eagle Festival scheduled for November 17-21.

### **Sightings In Sitka by Kathleen Everest**

October 2004

Roads are rare in southeast Alaska, and sometimes the sun seems to be rare. Similarly in the last month, birders in Sitka have sited some rare species for this area or time of year. Rare bird sightings are not only fun, they are food for thought concerning the subtle changes that could be taking place.

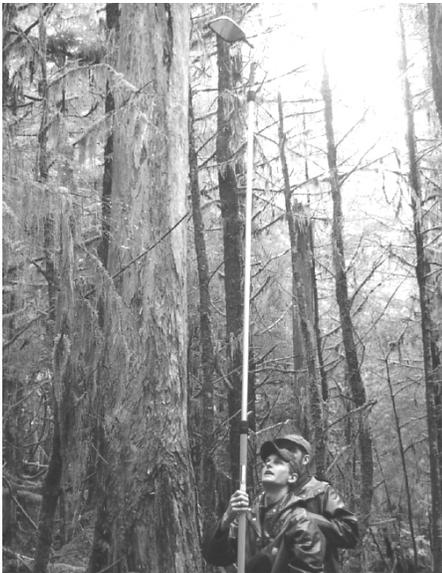
Kitty LaBounty had two Red Breasted Nut Hatches for two months at her feeders, and their presence is fairly rare in Sitka. Kitty also saw another bird that was tentatively identified as an American Gold Finch. He was definitely out of his territory as Gold Finches are not even listed in Guide To The Birds of Alaska (1990).

October 4, Marge Ward spotted the first predictable Common Loon coming through, but like Kitty, Marge sited a rare bird for this time of year – one American Coot on Swan Lake. The last two weeks, six to eight Ring Necked Ducks have also been seen on Swan Lake, and Marge notes that 15 years ago these ducks were never seen in Sitka.

Alaska, however, is home for Golden Crown Sparrows and Marge has seen these sparrows feeding with juncos off and on since September. October 2, Marge saw one Black Oyster Catcher, alias “Sea Crow,” and then she saw eight more on October 15 at Halibut Point Recreation Area dressed in black feathered costumes with red bills and feet for Halloween.

We can anticipate the next report and what rare birds may be seen coming through Sitka.

### **RESEARCH ON BIRD NESTING SUCCESS IN COASTAL BUFFERS ON PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND** By Dave Sperry, a graduate student at Humboldt University



*Dave Checking the Occupancy of a Pacific-slope Flycatcher Nest*

The association between declines in songbird populations and forest fragmentation has received a great deal of attention in the last few decades. In the Pacific Northwest, timber harvesting has resulted in removal of large expanses of old-growth forest, fragmenting original forest and increasing the amount of forest edge. Recent forest management practices have focused on protecting and maintaining habitat quality for terrestrial wildlife, including migratory and resident species of birds. Specifically, the 1997 revised Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan included an increase in the no-harvest buffer zone along all marine coastlines from 152.4m (500ft) to 304.8m (1000ft) to promote conservation of wildlife habitat.

In 2003 and 2004, I conducted research on Prince of Wales Island to evaluate differences in reproductive success of breeding birds within narrow and wide coastal buffers. I worked in seven study sites within the Staney Creek and Polk Inlet areas. Preliminary analyses of reproductive measures have produced some interesting trends. Five of seven species I monitored were more likely to successfully produce young in wider buffers. Although we have not determined yet if nest concealment differed between narrow and wide buffers, previous studies have shown that reproductive success was positively correlated to the amount of vegetative cover around nests.

Along with examining differences between treatments, I also documented differences in nest site location among species. Cavity-nesting species, such as Red-breasted Sapsuckers and Chestnut-backed Chickadees, nested closer to the harvest edge than the coastal edge. Tree mortality due to increased sunlight and changes in soil composition may have been higher along harvested edges and therefore, cavity-nesting species were able to find dead or dying trees suitable for excavation. Open cup nesting species, such as Pacific-slope Flycatchers and Swainson’s Thrushes, were more likely to nest closer to the natural, coastal edge. Food availability or nest concealment may be the mechanism behind nest site

selection of these species. This information on nest site selection and reproductive success may help influence future forest management decisions.

Although the results presented here are preliminary, the increased buffer width implemented under the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan benefits both migratory and resident bird species. This research was funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tongass Monitoring Program. If you have further questions or comments regarding my research, please email me at [dms45@humboldt.edu](mailto:dms45@humboldt.edu).

## **Clips from the Conservation Committee:**

The Conservation Committee welcomes involvement from all members. Let us know what interests and concerns you have in Juneau and around Southeast. If you have comments or would like to become involved in the Conservation Committee, please contact the chair, Sari Saunders, at [conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org), or any other committee or Board member.

**1. Board of Game meeting** – The state Board of Game (BOG) will meet from Nov 2-5<sup>th</sup> in Juneau. There are a number of proposals that have been submitted that affect Southeast, either specifically or because they are statewide proposals. **Proposals involving the Juneau area** include suggestions to allow hunting in Dredge Lakes, allow archery hunting near the Juneau road system and Mendenhall Lake area, and allowing bear baiting in the Juneau area. Community members should be particularly aware of Proposal 67. **The Board of Game has requested a review of all areas currently closed to hunting and trapping, and controlled use areas statewide, to determine the need for these closures. After publication of the proposal for public comment, the Board may repeal or modify said closures.** Thus, locations in Unit 1C (which includes Juneau) and other Units in Southeast that are now closed that the BOG may open for hunting at their discretion at the end of the public testimony period of the meeting, would include (among others): (1) areas between the coast and ¼ mile inland of Glacier Highway to Peterson Creek, portions of Douglas highway, Mendenhall Loop Road, and Thane Road; (2) areas adjacent to Mendenhall Lake and the glacier visitors' center; Auke Lake area (for taking of waterfowl). No specific changes to these closures have been posted for consideration. **Ketchikan area** a strip ¼ mile on each side Tongass Hwy system; **Hyder** portions of Salmon River drainage; **Anan Creek area**; **Haines area** a strip ¼ mile wide both sides Lutak Road between Mi 7 & Chilkoot Lake & Chilkoot River bridge to end; **Wrangell area** strip ¼ mile wide both sides Stikine Hwy. City limits to FS boundary; **Petersburg area** ¼ mile both sides Mitkof Hwy Mi 0 to Crystal Lake, Petersburg Creek drainage closed to black bears, Blind Slough area; **Sitka area** ¼ mile both sides all State hwy's; **Admiralty Island, Chichagof Island, Baranof Island** each have one or more closed to brown bear hunting areas.

The Board is asking for the option to open areas across the state at its discretion, with no further requirement for public notice or scrutiny within a community of the specifics of these openings. The possibility of increased danger to the public and potential for inadequate analysis of impacts to wildlife is of concern to JAS. The proposals can be viewed online through a link at <http://www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/gameinfo/meetinfo/gprop.php>. The public may still submit written comments until the meeting date, and the meetings are open for public testimony. Attn: BOG Comments, AK Dept. of Fish and Game, Boards Support Section, PO Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526 (see the BOG website for information on the procedures for presenting testimony).

**2. Douglas Island Wolf Management Plan** – The wolf subcommittee of the Juneau Douglas Advisory Committee formed in March 2004. Stakeholders with often opposing views on wolf and deer conservation have worked hard within this framework to develop jointly a management plan for deer and wolves on Douglas Island. JAS supports the process of consensus undertaken by these community

groups, but is still concerned that, with the compromises made, wolves are unlikely to maintain a population on the Island. There are a number of proposals regarding Douglas Island wolves being considered by the Board of Game at its Nov. meeting (see website noted above). However, the latest plan, developed by the consensus-based wolf subcommittee is not available within the online materials.

**3. Cascade Point Dock** - CBJ Planning Commission did approve the Conditional Use Permit to Goldbelt Inc. for the ferry dock at Cascade Point within Berner's Bay (associated with the Kensington Mine project). There are 20 conditions of approval for the permit, some of which are associated with the Juneau Coastal Management Plan (JCMP). The CBJ staff report and the 20 conditions cited for permit approval can be read at [http://www.juneau.lib.ak.us/plancomm/documents/STF\\_USE04-42.PDF](http://www.juneau.lib.ak.us/plancomm/documents/STF_USE04-42.PDF). The public comment period on this project (as for the Kensington Mine) through the Alaska Coastal Management Plan ended on Oct. 22, so we await a decision on compliance with enforceable policies of the ACMP by the AK Department of Natural Resources.

**4. Kensington Gold Project** – As with the Cascade Point dock, the public comment period regarding compliance with the ACMP ended Oct. 22. A Record of Decision (ROD) is expected from the Forest Service on this project early in Nov. There will be a period of time available for the public to review the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the ROD and comment (appeal the decision) should there be grounds for this.

**5. Mixing Zones in Salmon Streams** – The AK Dept of Conservation (DEC) is considering allowing mixing zones in freshwater streams in which spawning occurs. Mixing zones are zones where wastewater from industrial or sewage-treatment plants is discharged into the water to be diluted. Current standards do not allow mixing zones in fish spawning areas and the DEC wants to change the rules to allow mixing zones in these areas as long as they "do not adversely affect spawning, incubation or rearing in rivers and streams." The DEC indicates that the burden of proof would be on the industry or group discharging the pollutant to prove that no harm will come to fish populations using the zone for spawning or rearing. The DEC envisions three situations where mixing zones could be allowed in spawning areas: (1) the pollutant does not necessarily affect fish or fish spawning (e.g., a colorant); (2) the discharged can be timed to avoid impacts on fish spawning, eggs... (3) adverse effects can be offset by habitat improvements or other measures. Information is available at [www.state.ak.us/dec/water/wqsar/trireview/mixingzones.htm](http://www.state.ak.us/dec/water/wqsar/trireview/mixingzones.htm) and public comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. Nov. 1.

**6. Downtown waterfront development**– If you recall, in the spring, JAS submitted comments regarding a proposal by Aniakchak Inc. for a condominium development on the downtown waterfront. This proposal has again reared its head, in modified form. The development now proposed is a dock to be used for a marine retail business. The square footage is 1' below that for which a CBJ Conditional Use Permit would be required. A decision will be reached regarding ACMP compliance by Nov 11. The public can examine the proposal and public notice through the ACMP public notice site (<http://notes3.state.ak.us/pn/pubnotic.nsf/?Open>, then search for Aniakchak under Archived notices). If you'd like to see a copy of JAS' comments on the initial project, please let me know.

**7. Juneau Access Project (aka The Road)** – The supplemental Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for the Juneau Access project should be released in mid Nov. After this, there will be public hearings regarding the document and the project. Watch for notification of hearings in the Juneau Empire and online. The project homepage has links to the initial DEIS and other background information at: [http://www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/projectinfo/ser/juneau\\_access/index.html](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/projectinfo/ser/juneau_access/index.html).



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

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**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

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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  
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