

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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FIRST OF THE FALL JUNEAU AUDUBON EVENING MEETINGS: OCTOBER 12 AT DIPAC, 7:00 P.M. DIPAC Personnel will be available to show folks around their facility, followed by a short Juneau Audubon annual meeting.

Election of Officers: by Brenda Wright, Juneau Audubon Society president

Come join us at our annual meeting to elect the Juneau Audubon chapter officers and enjoy DIPAC's aquarium. We are electing president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary. Our candidates for office include Jeff Sauer for president, Mark Schwan for vice-president, Liz Blecker for treasurer, and Patty Rose for secretary. I hope you can all come and enjoy the presentation and vote for the new officers. If you are interested in helping with any of our standing committees--conservation, membership, newsletter, or public market just call or e-mail any of the officers listed in the newsletter

I hope many of you are already subscribers to the Yahoo chat group Eaglechat. It is a way to share your birding experiences and questions with other birders. It is easy to join. Just Google eaglechat and follow the instructions for joining a Yahoo group. As it is now officially fall, we all have the opportunity to participate in studies to increase our knowledge about birds. The Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology (<http://birds.cornell.edu/>) has Project Feeder Watch and The Great Backyard Bird Count (in February). In November, I like to participate in the Thanksgiving Day bird count. There are other projects for you to explore. Look at American Birding conservation programs/volunteer opportunities (<http://americanbirding.org/>). And do not forget to check out our parent organization, National Audubon Society www.audubon.org/. Your local Juneau Audubon web page has a local bird checklist, lecture schedules, and past newsletters (www.juneau-audubon-society.org/).

PUBLIC MARKET IN NOVEMBER Juneau Audubon will have a booth in the Public Market at Centennial Hall November 24-26. We are looking for ideas for merchandise in addition to our jelly and jams. Mary Lou has been able to find some nagoonberries this year even in the midst of a poor berry crop and record-breaking rainfall! Please bring your empty half pint canning jars to the public meeting to be reused. Juneau Audubon will also continue to sponsor the Nature Crafts for kids. If you have ideas for crafts, natural materials to donate, or would like to help please let us know. Also please get ready to volunteer a few hours of your time in the regular booth and send ideas/suggestions to our coordinator-Ellen Anderson public-market@juneau-audubon-society.org

TREE SWALLOW NESTING IN JUNEAU, INITIAL YEAR REPORT

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Tree swallows are commonly used as indicators of environmental change in wildlife. Tree swallows readily use nest boxes and can be attracted to specific areas by nest boxes, making them an ideal species for field studies. Adult tree swallows primarily forage within a 400 - 500m radius of the nest, and in doing so accumulate contaminants from these localized environments. Because the Juneau landfill and former waste incinerator are located in an area used by feeding swallows, this was the focus area of this study. Four other areas were selected for nest boxes in suitable tree swallow habitat.

Tree swallow nest boxes were constructed by residents of Gastineau Human Services, volunteers from Boy Scout Troop 11 worked on box placement. Standard size tree swallow boxes were used and were attached to cedar posts at about 5' above ground surface. Boxes were located at least 30 m apart to minimize swallow territorial behavior.

A total of 50 nest boxes were erected, 10 in each of five areas, the Mendenhall State Game Refuge, the beaver pond complex behind the Juneau Community Garden, the pond adjacent to the Pioneer's Home property, along the Mendenhall River behind Vintage Park office complex, and the Lemon Creek / landfill wetlands. Boxes were checked on a regular schedule, about every 3 days, to document nest construction, egg-laying and fledging dates.

Nesting was initiated from mid to late May with the exception of one nest that was initiated in mid-June. All boxes that were occupied had 4 to 6 eggs. A total of 13 broods were successfully fledged (26% success rate). Fledging occurred from mid to late July. A total of 46 fledglings were banded, and 13 fledglings presumably fledged before banding. There were 3 broods that failed, most likely due to parents spending much time foraging and not brooding the young. With cool wet weather, adults need to keep nestlings warm, as the young are unable to thermoregulate before their feathers develop. One box had all chicks missing a few days after hatching; it was unknown if predation had occurred. Another nest and chicks were totally missing from the box; this box, located at the Police Station pond, was most likely vandalized. Unfortunately, both of these boxes were from the focus area, and no other boxes were occupied in the landfill wetlands. The most successful boxes were those located in the Mendenhall Wetlands with 5 boxes occupied and 5 successful broods. The Pioneer Home pond site had 4 successful broods, 4 broods at the Mendenhall River site and failure of both nests at the Community Garden.

Tree swallows have a high nest site fidelity and box use should increase next year. This first year pilot study will be continued for at least the next two years.

SKAGWAY SUMMER 2006 BIRDING SUMMARY by C. E. Furbish

Quite a few unusual observations were noted by Skagway birders this summer. In town, many people have remarked on the increase in Northwestern Crows, often displacing Robins, Jays and other birds normally seen at backyard feeders. Large flocks of Pipits and Cedar Waxwings were also seen in town. Many birders have had close encounters with Spruce Grouse - in town, in Dyea, and on the hillsides - including one persistent bird that seemed to have amorous intentions toward a Dyea resident.

New sightings since May include Northern Mockingbird, Hooded Merganser, Black Oystercatcher, Hudsonian Godwit and Purple Finch. Birds we will be adding to our checklist from sightings this past spring and summer also include - Greater White-fronted Goose, Ring-billed Gull and Cassin's Vireo.

Contributors: John McDermott, Kevin Payne, Gary Brummett, JoAnn and Andrew Beierly,

WRANGELL REPORT by Bonnie Demerjian

Lazuli bunting on the Stikine River

The Stikine River slices through the Coast Range, rising in northern British Columbia and traveling over 350 miles to saltwater near Wrangell. This transboundary river carries more than just water - it frequently serves as a transportation



corridor for wildlife. Sometimes, particularly during migration, bird species appear here that are more common to the interior than the coast. When Mary and Earl Benitz, who make their home year-round on Farm Island on the delta of the river, saw a brilliant blue bird at their feeder last week, they knew they were seeing something out of the ordinary. Pulling out their bird guides, they tentatively identified the bird as a Lazuli bunting. Their photographs proved it.

While not unknown in Alaska, the Lazuli bunting is a truly uncommon visitor and almost certainly not a breeder. The USGS checklist for Alaska states that the chance of viewing one here is “minute” while the Wings Over Alaska list calls any sighting accidental.

Most maps show southwest British Columbia as the Lazuli bunting’s northern breeding limit. It favors riparian areas with nearby thickets and weedy open areas, all abundant on the lower Stikine. They may descend on feeders in the fall and that’s where the Benitz’s bird has spent the past week or so.

Northern harriers are “as thick as ducks” on the Stikine flats right now, feasting on a bumper crop of mice. The rodents are also bringing out great horned owls.

Back in town the sight of a Common nighthawk, also a probable river traveler, soared above the post office delighting another Wrangell birder.

A few straggling warblers are hanging around, the usual Cedar waxwings have gone to places unknown and the robins are stripping gardens of late raspberries and currents, perhaps because of a shortage of wild berries this long, strange "summer".

BIRDING NEWS FROM KETCHIKAN by Teri Goucher

As Autumn arrives there is a deliberate urgency for all life to complete the seasonal cycle, especially in Alaska! The crispy breeze blows colorful leaves as nature grasps the last golden warmth of summer, preparing for the winter months.

Migrating through are waves of warblers and robins and the remaining female **Rufous Hummingbirds** make their last appearance as they journey south.

A **Western Tanager** was seen north of town on August 29th.

Several people were lucky to enjoy a great look at a **Barred Owl** just off the road south of town the last days of August.

A couple groups of **Sandhill Cranes** flew low along the coast and rafts of **Western Grebes** are beginning to form in the channel.

Sharp-shinned Hawks have been regularly successful hunting **Steller's Jays** at north end neighborhoods which must be quite a sight to see! Larger flocks of jays are returning to area feeders lately, seemingly just as the seed is scattered!

Several **Mourning Doves** were spotted area wide and there was a single **Glaucous Gull** at Ward Lake during the middle of September.

An uncommon **Northern Waterthrush** was found at Lake McDonald which is on the mainland about 40 miles north of Ketchikan on September 20. Waterthrushes are a type of warbler that frequent damp areas, feed and nest on the ground, and rhythmically pump their tails as they walk.

Let's enjoy the remaining nice weather and go birding because Autumn often brings brief visits of more unusual species as they migrate south through Alaska once more.

HAINES REPORT By Georgia Giacobbe [dngeorgia@hughes.net]

Most Hainesites are in denial about winter coming but the signs are there. First, once the skies cleared from a major rainstorm on Sunday the 24th, you could clearly see quite a bit of termination snow. As far as the bird signs, the Magpies started to move in about 10 days ago, mid September. The Bald Eagle population hasn't started growing significantly yet on the Chilkat River, however, we know when those salmon really run they will be there. The Bald Eagle Festival scheduled for November 8-12, 2006, is counting on it. In September, there continued to be a few species still hanging around. A regular flock of Trumpeter Swan were in residence at Chilkat Lake numbering anywhere from 6 to 20. On a trip to Skagway on the 17th, this writer and everyone else on the Chilkat Cruises ferry noted a large raft of Surf Scoters (150?) hanging out in Taiya Inlet.

SITKA REPORT by Matt Goff

There is a birding seminar being offered at Sheldon Jackson College this fall. Sessions are open to the public. The schedule is not yet finalized, but the following are planned so far:

- 5 October: Kitty Labounty talks about Backyard Birds, how to attract them, observe them, and contribute to science with your observations.
- 12 October: Dr. Victoria Vosburg, veterinarian at the Alaska Raptor Center will talk about bird physiology
- 26 October: A talk about Song Bird Banding and/or Bird Flu Monitoring is tentatively planned but not yet confirmed
- 2 November: Matt Kirchoff of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, topic unconfirmed
- 16 November: Michelle Kissling of the USFWS will make a presentation on monitoring nocturnal owls in southeast
- 30 November: Andrew Thoms, director of the Sitka Conservation Society will present on Warblers in Winter

The talks are planned to take place in the Rasmusson Student Center on Sheldon Jackson College Campus. Date, location, and topic of the talks are subject to correction or change, so please contact Matt Goff (e-mail: goff@nawwal.org, phone: 747-5233) for the latest information, or visit <http://www.sitkanature.org/birdseminar.html>

Sitka now has its own birding e-mail list. Visit <http://www.sitkanature.org/> and follow the link for subscribing to the SitkaBirds List. Alternatively, you can e-mail Matt Goff (goff@nawwal.org) and request to be added to the list. Recent highlights from the list have included reports of Hooded Mergansers, Fork-tailed Storm-petrels close enough to be viewed from shore, Merlins in a backyard, Sharp-shinned Hawks at Starrigavan, an American Coot at Swan Lake, several sightings of Mourning Doves around town, a probable Lapland Longspur (unusual for Sitka) visiting a local feeder, and an unusual fall sighting of a Marbled Godwit at Totem Park.

GUSTAVUS SIGHTING—LATE AUGUST-SEPTEMBER By Nat Drumheller, natdrumheller@hotmail.com

It was a great month to be out birding with lots of regular migrants passing through, a few rare birds including a couple of first sightings for the area, and some nice weather.

Sandhill Cranes began moving through in late August and are still being seen. Their numbers peaked in mid-September with one observer estimating that over 5000 took to the air from west of town on the morning of 9/13. Juvenile and adult **Peregrine Falcons**, as well as other hawks and falcons, were common on the beaches through the month. Both **Pacific** and **American Golden-Plovers** were seen regularly in small numbers through the period with high counts of eleven for American and over twenty for Pacific. **Baird's Sandpipers** were observed in higher numbers than usual with **sixty-two** counted on 9/5 near the town dock. An amazing **three-hundred Wilson's Snipes** were estimated on a short stretch of beach upland on 8/14. The month saw a spike in owl detections with several **Western Screech-Owls**, a **Great Horned Owl**, a **Northern Saw-whet Owl**,

several **Northern Pygmy-Owls**, a **Short-eared Owl**, and a **Boreal Owl** being heard or seen. The Boreal Owl's hooting was recorded digitally.

A **Northern Mockingbird** showed up at a residence in town on 9/8 and stayed for three days providing a first record for the area. Another first for the area was a juvenile **Ruff** (or **Reeve** since it was likely a female) that was at the mouth of the Salmon River on 8/31. A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was on the beach near the Good River on 9/12. **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were seen on three dates with at least three observed on 9/23. **California Gulls** continue to be seen with the latest report being of a second-year bird on 9/22. A **Brown-headed Cowbird** was seen near a horse in town on two dates in late August. **MacGillivray's Warblers** were seen on two dates in August adding to just a handful of records for the area. A **White-throated Sparrow** was among a flock of mixed birds on 9/25.

Thanks to Bruce Paige for records information and to the following for sharing observations: Bruce Paige, Fawn Bauer, Hank Lentfer, Sean Neilson, Lewis Sharman, Greg Streveler, Julie Vathke, Phoebe Vanselow, Kiana Young. By Nat Drumheller, natdrumheller@hotmail.com

Conservation Notes:

“Judge Halts U.S. Sale of Alaska Oil Drilling Leases” from (Mike Daulton, director of conservation policy for National Audubon Society, quoted in an article about the decision to temporarily prevent the U.S. Interior Department from going forward with plans to expand oil drilling in the Teshekpuk Lake area of Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve) <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=aXd.zYn.diE&refer=us>

Court Orders a Time-Out to Protect Clean Water at Kensington Mine

On August 24, 2006, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued an injunction halting the Kensington Gold Mine's destructive dam construction activities at Lower Slate Lake. If allowed to proceed as planned, the Kensington Mine would be the first mine in a generation to dispose of its chemically-treated mine tailings in a lake or stream. This decision protects Lower Slate Lake while the Court examines the legality of the Kensington Mine's plan to use the lake as a tailings dump. For more information and pictures of the construction go to www.seacc.org

Conservationists Sue to Protect Tongass Roadless Areas

Conservation groups sued the U.S. Forest Service because, in developing the new plan for Alaska's Tongass National Forest, the agency failed to consider permanent wilderness area protection for any portion of the millions of acres of undeveloped wild lands on the Tongass. More information at www.earthjustice.org

Juneau Access Road

“Currently, the only surface transportation to and from Juneau is provided by ferry and barge service. Demand on the state ferry system exceeds capacity during the summer months and costs for ferry users are high. Access to government, medical services,

employment, education, economic opportunity, and resource development for remote communities is limited by the lack of adequate transportation in the area.” Forest Service fact sheet: http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/forest_facts/faqs/jnuroad.shtml
SEACC legal claims: <http://www.seacc.org/index.php?section=93>

Alaska Fish and Game Advisory Committee--Proposed rule changes for 2006

There are five regulation proposals submitted to the Board of Game: Proposal 13 and 15 would open Swan Cove/Swan Island to bear hunting. Proposal 16 would open bear hunting within the city limits of Angoon; which is currently closed. Proposal 39 would extend the wolf hunting season for one month and would allow 5 wolves to be shot during that timeframe; from April 30 to May 30. This proposal pertains to the entire Game Management Unit 1. Proposal 40 would allow for aerial wolf killing and one day land and shoot to occur in Unit 1D, which approximately begins at Sullivan Island and includes the Chilkat Valley. These proposals will be deliberated upon at the SE Board Of Game meeting in Wrangell, Nov.10-15. There will be a pre hearing in Juneau on Oct.19 at 6p.m. at Centennial Hall. This pre hearing will allow for public testimony, letters, etc. related to all SE proposals. Following is the address in which to look these proposals up on the internet at: <http://www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/gameinfo/meetinfo/gprop.php>

From American Bird Conservancy’s email: U.S. Senate Passes Crucial Legislation to Protect Migratory Birds -- *Bill now winging its way to the President to be signed into law* -- Washington, D.C. – (30 September, 2006) Late yesterday evening, the United States Senate unanimously passed a revised Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act of 2006 (NMBCIA, H.R. 518). The legislation, originally authored by Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) and Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), was added to H.R. 4957, the Tylersville Fish Hatchery Conveyance Act. The NMBCIA authorizes matching grants to support conservation programs for migratory birds, and when fully implemented, will authorize \$6.5 million per year for projects. For more information, see: <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NMBCIA/index.shtm>.

“Today’s passage of the NMBCIA will help a broad range of migratory birds, from the Cerulean Warbler to the Baltimore Oriole, by ensuring they will have the healthy habitat they need on both ends of their annual migration,” said George Fenwick, President of American Bird Conservancy. “Migratory birds are not only beautiful and interesting creatures eagerly welcomed by millions of Americans into their backyards every year, they play vital biological, recreational, and economic roles. For example, migratory birds help generate \$2.7 billion annually* to the U.S. economy through wildlife watching activities, and they help our farmers by consuming billions of harmful insect pests from many important commercial food crop and forest species.”

Each year, an estimated 10 billion birds of some 800 species breed in North America. Only a small percentage are protected under the Endangered Species Act, yet more than one-third have declining populations, are restricted to small ranges, or face serious threats. NMBCIA is the only federal funding program designed specifically for migratory bird species throughout North America, and it also provides the only dedicated source of funds for migratory birds on their wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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. You will receive the National *Audubon* Magazine plus Juneau Chapter newsletter *The Raven*.

_____ \$20 (1-year introductory rate) _____ \$15 (1-year student/senior rate) _____ \$30 Basic renewal

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip Code _____
Telephone number _____

_____ My check for \$ _____ is enclosed

_____ Please bill me

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If you prefer to support Juneau Audubon Society only, and receive 9 months of *The Raven*, send the completed form above with \$10 to: Membership Chair, PO Box 21725, Juneau, AK 99802. Please let us know if you prefer to have the newsletter sent by electronic _____ e-mail or paper copy_____

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