

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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Juneau Audubon Society

March 2007

SOUTHEAST WILD, Public Nature Series
March 8, Egan Lecture Hall (221/222) (Glacier View Room)
7:00 p.m.

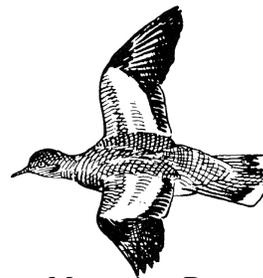
"Birding and turtling in Trinidad and Tobago" presented by
Linda Shaw and Beverly Agler

Come join us for a trip to the tropical islands off the NE coast of South America. Enjoy the exotic species like the cave dwelling oil birds. See the beaches where turtles congregate to lay their eggs in the sand after traveling thousands of miles through the vastness of the oceans. Sip tea on the Asa Wright Nature Center's veranda whilst observing hummingbirds and parrots, and join us for a leisurely stroll to the manakin lek and bellbird forest".

April 12 at 7 p.m. UAS "Exploring the Shorezone web page" with Mandy Lindeberg, April 12 at 7pm UAS Egan room 221/222. Come fly the coast of SE Alaska and zoom down into Berners Bay for a close up look at flora and fauna of the near shore waters.

Birder Profiles: by Jeff Sauer, Juneau Audubon President
Ketchikan: Steve Heint and Andy Piston

This month we profile two top-notch birders in Ketchikan. They are Steve Heint and Andy Piston. These two very serious birders have put Ketchikan on the bird map of Alaska. Information coming from them has caused Alaska birders to sit up and take notice, but also contributed greatly to new or little known scientific knowledge of Ketchikan birds such as: Mourning Doves and Band-tailed Pigeons in Ketchikan, seen every year for weeks, and now known as to when and where; Anna's Hummingbird documented in Ketchikan for months at a time; California Gulls now documented as a fairly common gull species in the Ketchikan area.



Mourning Dove

And then there are the rarities of just the past few years: a Northern Mockingbird on the Christmas Bird Count this past December; Little Gull; Common Grackle; Brewer's Blackbird; Western Meadowlark; Tropical Kingbird; Orchard Oriole; Black-headed Grosbeak; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; White Wagtail; Nashville Warbler; and on and on. Through dedicated daily birding, and with meticulous record keeping, the information has been coming out. And, of course, what is really interesting is this picture of a unique bird place in the state. No where else does the local bird list look quite like this southern southeast town.

Steve and Andy have been at it for over twelve years. They both work together in fisheries at the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, and both get to work out in the field a lot in the summer. Steve Heint has been a birder since high school in Oregon and a very serious birder since around the time of his 1990 arrival to Ketchikan.

Andy Piston moved to Ketchikan in 1993. He grew up in Bellevue Washington. He took a job with the Fish & Game and started to work with Steve Heint. Andy had an interest in the natural world but was not a birder. He quickly saw in Steve a very avid birder. Thinking perhaps that Steve's interest in birds was a bit over the top, a few wise cracks were made now and then. But one day, way back then, the two were in a field camp out on Prince of Wales Island, when a Northern Pygmy-Owl called. Steve knew what it was. Not only that but Steve knew how to imitate it with his own voice/ whistle. Steve did that and the little owl flew right to them, very close. Some days later in the same place a similar occurrence happened but this time with a Barred Owl. Andy was rather blown away by these events, and they proved to be defining moments for him. He started birding, and very seriously at that. And, of course he had a great teacher in the cubicle next to him. The rest is history. Steve and Andy do bird alone, but also spend a lot of time birding together. The results have been amazing. Lucky for us. Steve Heint is on the Alaska Checklist Committee, which puts him in the realm of the very top birders in Alaska. Steve also wrote the Ketchikan chapter (as well as the Hyder chapter) of the American Birding Association, *Birder's Guide to Alaska*. Andy is the Christmas Bird count Compiler for Ketchikan. Steve lives in Ketchikan with his wife Brooke Hunt and two daughters. Brooke is a local gal and the reason Steve ended up in Ketchikan. Steve has a BS in Biology. Andy is married to Ardy Piston and is soon to finish up his bachelors degree.

[KETCHIKAN REPORT FOR FEBRUARY-by Teri Goucher](#) (Ed. Note: Teri says she gets quite a bit of her information about birds from Steve and Andy)

[Winter has released it's grip slightly in our area this month as spring bulbs begin to emerge and rain showers outnumber the snow squalls.](#)

[On January 28 three **Brandt's Cormorants** were seen on the mountain point boat ramp breakwater south of town.](#)

[Two **White-throated Sparrows** continue to winter at a home on the north end and two **Black-billed Magpies** remain in the Ward Cove area.](#)

- Clover Pass, about 13 miles north of town, is an excellent area to view various sea bird species. On February 25 there were approximately 2000 **Marbled Murrelets** off shore along with a very early alternate plumage **Pigeon Guillemot** and a **Rhinoceros Auklet** which represented one of the few records of this species for this month.

- There were two **Glaucous Gulls** found in the huge mass of feeding birds that frequent the waters near a fish processing plant in town. This spot attracts hundreds of Long-tailed Ducks, several scoter species, mergansers, goldeneye, the occasional Black-legged Kittiwake, and thousands of gulls. In this congregation of birds, two **Kumlien's Gulls** were present the 6th through the 19th. Kumlien's Gulls are a race of Iceland Gull which is closely related to our Thayer's Gull. This gull resembles a small Glaucous Gull in coloring with a small slender bill with a pale base. The plumage is very light gray with pale buffy-brown barring overall including a barred tail. The debate continues as to whether Kumlien's Gulls are members of either Thayer's or Iceland gull species and the wide variation in plumage coloring throughout their ranges makes identification very difficult!

- Just a few weeks of winter remain before Spring birding begins, so get out there to find more unusual winter visitors!!

WRANGELL REPORT By Bonnie Demerjian

Birding has been fairly dull around Wrangell this past month. Even the juncos have made themselves scarce. Bald eagles are showing up and a few are perching in companionable pairs as well as competing with gulls as they follow the shrimp boats into town.

The Great Backyard Bird Count produced mainly waterbirds. American widgeon, mallards, harlequin ducks, Barrow's goldeneyes, buffleheads, and common and red-breasted mergansers were the most common. Glaucous-winged gulls, of course, and mew gulls, a few marbled murrelets and common, Pacific and one yellow-billed loon were counted.

Earl and Mary Benitz who live all winter on Farm Island in the Stikine River delta report that one Lincoln's sparrow and a single fox sparrow have visited their feeder all winter. They report that a flock of a dozen or more pine grosbeaks, rare in Wrangell, feed nearby. A northern pygmy owl has also hung around and entertained them with its calls for months. A few weeks ago they spotted it in a nearby tree with a large mouse but only days ago found it dead from unknown causes. The Benitz' have a great horned owl nest within view of their cabin and have been hearing calls already this month. They say the owls nested last year on March 10 and will be watching for the event this year.

eBird Alaska By Rich Capitan, Education Specialist, Audubon Alaska

It's winter in Alaska, and I'm looking for things to do at home - tasks that have fallen by the wayside – cleaning the garage, organizing our bookshelves, trying to write that children's book I've been meaning to do, and cleaning up my bird Lifelist. It is more challenging than it sounds; gathering hastily written field notes scribbled onto AC grocery receipts with the Bean Goose, Smew, Bramblings, and Common Greenshank that I recorded while working as a naturalist on St. Paul Island a decade ago- all stuck in my National Geographic Bird Guide (first edition). If you are like me, luckily there is now a place to record bird sightings, in an organized fashion, that is detailed, easy to use and more importantly, your sightings can be shared with birders and researchers around the country. It also gives insight into the lives of our summer birds – where do Varied Thrushes migrate to?

In early 2007, Audubon Alaska will announce the launch of eBird Alaska, a portal to the greater eBird online database developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society.

eBird provides a simple mechanism for people to record birds observations made anywhere in North America. Once entered, you can retrieve information on your sightings, from the backyard, to the neighborhood, to your favorite bird-watching locations, at any time for personal use. eBird also allows you to explore your observations in more ways than just printing out your lists. For instance, you can create and manage maps and graphs or create tables, using your own or all eBird observations, summarized by week, month or year. Access to the entire historical database allows you to find out what other eBird participants are reporting from across North America. In addition, you have the satisfaction of contributing to the cumulative eBird database, which may be used by birdwatchers, scientists, and conservationists to learn more about the distributions, movements, and numbers of birds across the entire continent.

More information can be found at the eBird website: www.ebird.org. You can also contact Audubon Alaska's education specialist, Rich Capitan at: rcapitan@audubon.org or 907-276-7034 for more information. See you on eBird Alaska!

SKAGWAY BIRD CLUB WELCOMES VISITORS

The Skagway Bird Club would like to invite any Southeast Birders who come to Skagway in the next few months to spend an hour or two with us during your visit. We would be interested in hearing an informal talk/discussion about any birding subject of your interest, or perhaps simply accompany you for a brief bird walk so we can learn from your expertise. If you're going to be in Skagway and would like to participate with us, just give us a call:

Elaine Furbish (907) 983-2049 or

Sandy Snell-Dobert (907) 983-3510

Elaine or Sandy will arrange a meeting time and place with you, and then get the word out to the Skagway Birders.

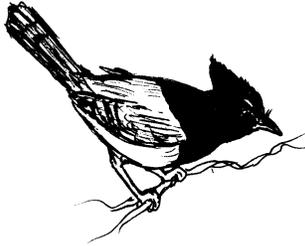
JUNEAU'S GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT By Brenda Wright

Juneau ranked second in number of counts with 43 but 4th in number of species with 40. Gustavus, Kodiak, and Sitka tallied more species than Juneau. Gustavus tallied 61 and the entire state had a count of 96 species. Juneau's most numerous species was mallard followed by mew gulls. To see results for other locations in Alaska or North America just go to www.gbhc.birdsource.org and click on "Explore the results" Please note that the number of herring gulls might be an accident of typing and that we all need to do our best to ensure the best possible data. Thanks to everyone who participated!

<u>Species [taxonomic]</u> <u>[alphabetic]</u>	<u>Number of Birds</u>	<u>Number of Checklists</u> <u>Reporting the Species</u>
<u>Canada Goose</u>	199	3
<u>Gadwall</u>	3	1
<u>Mallard</u>	1,013	21
<u>Greater Scaup</u>	72	2
<u>Harlequin Duck</u>	46	4
<u>Surf Scoter</u>	47	7
<u>White-winged Scoter</u>	2	1
<u>Black Scoter</u>	4	1
<u>Long-tailed Duck</u>	1	1
<u>Bufflehead</u>	34	8
<u>Common Goldeneye</u>	30	4
<u>Barrow's Goldeneye</u>	85	5
<u>Hooded Merganser</u>	1	1
<u>Common Merganser</u>	13	3
<u>Red-breasted Merganser</u>	14	6
<u>Pacific Loon</u>	4	1
<u>Common Loon</u>	1	1
<u>Horned Grebe</u>	20	4
<u>Bald Eagle</u>	63	22
<u>Dunlin</u>	40	1
<u>Mew Gull</u>	646	4
<u>Herring Gull</u>	186	9
<u>Glaucous-winged Gull</u>	345	12
<u>Common Murre</u>	2	2
<u>Pigeon Guillemot</u>	1	1
<u>Marbled Murrelet</u>	9	3
<u>Northern Pygmy-Owl</u>	1	1
<u>Steller's Jay</u>	14	9
<u>Black-billed Magpie</u>	3	3
<u>Northwestern Crow</u>	626	19
<u>Common Raven</u>	103	25
<u>Black-capped Chickadee</u>	6	1
<u>Chestnut-backed Chickadee</u>	61	15
<u>Brown Creeper</u>	1	1
<u>Varied Thrush</u>	1	1
<u>Song Sparrow</u>	3	3
<u>Dark-eyed Junco</u>	78	13
<u>Common Redpoll</u>	277	13
<u>Hoary Redpoll</u>	7	4
<u>Pine Siskin</u>	2	2
Total	4,064	

HAINES REPORT By Georgia Giacobbe

With 22 checklists, and 20 species Haines made the top 10 of communities in Alaska reporting in the Great Backyard Bird Count. This time the most commonly spotted bird



was not the Bald Eagle but the Common Raven at 169. The Common Redpoll was second at 79, the Bald Eagle came in third at 72. Rounding out the top ten species in Haines were Black Scoter at 37, Black-billed Magpie 25, Common Goldeneye 22, Rock Pigeon 19, Boreal Chickadee 19, Common Merganser 17, and Steller's Jay 14. The other ten



species spotted that weekend were Trumpeter Swan, Buffleheads, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Glaucous Gull, Gray Jay, Northwestern Crow, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, American Dipper, and one Great Horned Owl. The diversity of birds seems to be a mirror of the diversity of backyards in Haines.

SITKA REPORT By Matt Goff

At least 50 different species were reported in the Great Backyard Bird Count, up from a previous high of 47 in 2000 (45 are currently showing on the website and at least 5 more were reported and will be included, pending review). Unusual sightings included up to 4 Horned Puffins visible from town and at least two different Rhinoceros Auklets, also close to town.

The Common Redpolls that were so abundant earlier in the winter seem to have dispersed when temperatures were warmer in February. It will be interesting to see if they return if current colder temperatures and snow persist.

As we look forward to the influx of birds with the coming Spring, perhaps it's time to reflect on some of the birds that have spent this winter in our area. In addition to the birds that winter most years in some abundance, there have been one or two American Wigeons, a Northern Pintail, and several Ring-necked Ducks at Swan Lake. Starrigavan has consistently had Trumpeter Swans, a Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, and up to 20 Black Oystercatchers. Also reported throughout the winter were a Western Screech Owl and a two Sharp-shinned Hawks. Birds notable by their relative scarcity this year have included Golden-crowned Kinglets and Varied Thrushes.

Mary Willson was the speaker for the 22 February Natural History Seminar at Sheldon Jackson College. She gave a very interesting talk about her work studying the American Dipper in the Juneau area. We enjoyed having the opportunity to listen to her talk and visit with her while she was here. Seminars planned for March include a March 8th talk in how distances to far away stars and galaxies are determined, and a March 29th talk on the birds of Chile. More information can be found at

<http://www.sitkanature.org/seminar.html>

GUSTAVUS SIGHTINGS By Nat Drumheller. natdrumheller@hotmail.com
January 24-February 27, 2007

This year's Great Backyard Bird Count occurred during four days of mild temperatures with rain, snow, fog, and wind. There were a few breaks in the weather during which conditions were good. The number of participants in Gustavus was down from last year, but coverage of the area was probably better than last year. A total of 65 species were found. The only new bird to the count was a **Western Grebe** which has been seen sporadically this winter in Bartlett Cove. A **Boreal Owl** was seen for the third GBBC in the last four years. This was the second sighting of a Boreal Owl this month. The hybrid **Northern Flicker** made the count. This bird shows traits of both red-shafted and yellow-shafted flickers and has been visiting suet feeders around town through the winter. The high counts for shorebirds were 3000 **Dunlin**, 720 **Rock Sandpipers**, and 280 **Sanderlings**. **Northern Shrikes** and **Merlins** were more numerous than usual, and **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were seen by two people. Other highlights were 3 **Ring-necked Ducks**, a high count of 51 **Pacific Loons**, a **Peregrine Falcon**, a **Short-eared Owl**, and several **Northern Pygmy-Owls**. A single **Pine Siskin** that has been frequenting a local feeder with a flock of redpolls was the only siskin in the count. (Results on the GBBC website continue to be updated. Currently, Black-capped Chickadees are shown in the Gustavus results. These will be changed to Chestnut-backed Chickadees.)

This was the second GBBC in which I had the pleasure of watching and listening as a **Northern Shrike** sang. This year, the shrike was singing a duet with a **Black-billed Magpie** that was in the adjacent tree out in open grasslands along the beach.

During the month, **Common Redpoll** numbers declined, although small flocks are still being seen. **Northern Pygmy-owls** were seen and heard regularly. One **Great Horned Owl** and multiple **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were reported during the period. There has been a drop in owl reports during the current cold spell. A **Greater Yellowlegs** was seen



American Three-toed Woodpecker
Photo by Nat Drumheller

twice in late January, and a **Lapland Longspur** was with a flock of **Snow Buntings** on 2/23. An **American Three-toed Woodpecker** has been a regular on a stack of firewood in town since 2/10, but it decided to not show itself for the GBBC. On 2/4, **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** were observed "smoke bathing" on a chimney cap from a woodstove as well as taking soot from the cap in their bills and rubbing it in their feathers.

Thanks to Bruce Paige, Phoebe Vanselow, Julie Vathke, Larry Platt, and Tania Lewis for sharing observations.

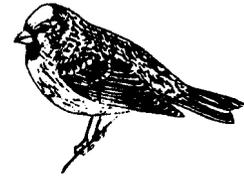
Talk about a close encounter!!!!

Posted in Eaglechat by: Bruce Page Fri Jan 26, 2007 10:14 am

Yesterday morning, in the uplands east of the Gustavus dock, I spotted a lone bird a few hundred yards distant flying in my direction. Putting the binocs on it, I ided it as a juv. common redpoll, and continued to keep the glasses on it as it flew onward.

After a short while, the focus maxed out and the bird blurred. Looking over the binocs, the redpoll approached, before finally spreading it's wings, rising a bit, and lit neatly on my hat. Though the redpoll call is usually too high for me to pick up, this one gave a clear series of notes when landing. With my green wardrobe, I do resemble a shrub,

admittedly. Over the years, this is the fourth species of wild bird to alight on my person. The others were a mountain chickadee, chestnut-backed chickadee (numerous times), and a red-breasted nuthatch. How's that for a personal checklist?



PROPOSED GOLF COURSE IN NORTH DOUGLAS IS LINKED TO HOUSING

Conservation Chair, Matt Kirchhoff

I had a conversation recently with Peter Metcalfe about Totem Creek's plans for developing the proposed golf course on North Douglas Island in Juneau. We covered far more ground than can be relayed in this short article, but I think it is useful to report to our members on where the project stands, where it is headed, and to promote ongoing dialogue on this issue. Articles in future newsletters will cover specific aspects of this project in more detail.

The golf course has a conditional use permit from the city, and Totem Creek is now working with two developers to develop a comprehensive development plan. The golf course will cost an estimated \$10 million to build and \$500,000 a year to operate. The proponents of the course intend to develop it with private funds, alleviating the concern that this project would consume precious city revenues or increase our tax burden. The plan, in concept, is to combine the golf course with residential development. In this way, the developers would effectively turn a finished golf course over to Totem Creek debt-free. The annual operating costs would be user-funded, with much-reduced greens fees for locals.

Peter Metcalfe was clear: if this project does not pencil out financially, it won't be built. And for it to pencil out financially, housing must be a part of the package.

Do we want to try and stop the golf course by opposing the housing?

I offer that most of us are willing to allow growth in Juneau—it's just a matter of how and where that growth occurs. Development of this Golf Course project, with CBJ oversight, may actually present us with some leverage to push for progressive housing options, including cottage-complex housing (small foot print), 4-star energy ratings, middle-income price ranges, and a "green" building code that incorporates eco-friendly

design, systems, and materials. If the city must subsidize development in any way, it should do so by providing financial incentives for what is environmentally “right”. Perhaps green houses blended with natural space, walking trails, and a golf course that provides recreational opportunity (golf, x-country skiing, hiking) is a good thing for Juneau. We should be willing, at least, to talk about these things.

The board will be discussing the Juneau Golf Course in more detail as plans unfold and become public. We have not taken a position, other than a promise to represent the concerns and wants of our members, and to work with the community, the city, and the developers for the most desirable conservation outcome possible. As the Juneau Board works on these and other conservation issues in Southeast Alaska, your feedback is always welcome. Comments can be sent to conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org.

CHANNEL ISLANDS STATE MARINE PARK



HB 94 and SB 57 -- Naming the 14 small islands and areas of the large Shelter Island, in the Juneau area, to the Marine Park System brings a positive recognition to their highest and best use for recreation. These two bills will likely come up for hearings in the Legislature in the near future. If you support these bills, it would be a good idea to express your support to our legislators.

2007 CBJ Comprehensive Plan—Draft for Citizen Review & Comment

The City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Community Development Department has published a 2007 Comprehensive Plan—Draft for Citizen Review and Comment, dated February 20, 2007. The 2007 Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) is a long-range blueprint designed to guide the growth, development and conservation of valued resources within our community, to the year 2020. The Plan is used to measure permit applications, capital improvement projects and CBJ budget allocations.

We expect that public comment and Planning Commission guidance and refinement of the draft Plan will take about four months; this includes a three month public outreach process of meeting with neighborhood and stakeholder groups from February through April.

The Comp Plan policies, schedule and results of meetings are posted on the CBJ website at www.juneau.org/ComprehensivePlanUpdate link. For further information and to submit your comments and suggestions, please contact planner Susana Montana at 586-0753 or Susana_montana@ci.juneau.ak.us

Ed. Note: We attended the meeting in the Auke Bay School and found the presentation very informative and well worth attending. Ms Montana listened and took notes and I feel the community ideas, that are reasonable, will be incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan if it is possible to include them. The plan seems to be focused more on infill rather than more sprawl. If you are interested, the dates and locations for further meetings are listed in the website above.

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*.

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