

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 33, Number 8

Juneau Audubon Society

April 2007

SOUTHEAST WILD, Public Nature Series
Thursday, April 12, UAS Egan Room (221/222) (Glacier View)
7:00 p.m.

"The Shorezone" and exciting look at the NOAA web page on the coastline of Alaska with Mandy Lindeberg. Come along on a low level flight along SE Alaska's rugged coastline and explore Berner's Bay flora and fauna.

Berners Bay Cruises

Juneau Audubon Spring Wildlife Extravaganza
Come join us for a trip past the end of the road!

April 14, 2007 8:30 am

May 6, 2007 @ 8:30 am and 1:30 pm

\$40/adult; \$5/children under 12 (must be accompanied by adult)

cruises depart from Don D. Statter Harbor

Tickets may be purchased at Hearthside Books

Naturalists will be on board

Sponsored by Juneau Audubon Society

CELEBRATION OF SWANS – APRIL 14-22 WHITEHORSE CANADA

The Celebration was initiated to raise awareness of the 5 important spring staging areas in southern Yukon. M'Clintock Bay, Teslin River, Tagish River, Klane River and Shallow Bay (Lake Laberge).

If you go to our website and click on Swan Haven and Celebration of Swans in the right hand column it will take you to the best information that we have at the moment. Swans have returned to Morley River and the Teslin River in central Yukon in mid March.

Bruce Bennett, Wildlife Viewing Biologist, Yukon Department of Environment Wildlife Viewing Program V5A, Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada Y1A 2C6

tel: (867) 667-5331, fax: (867) 393-6263

<http://www.environmentyukon.gov.yk.ca/viewing/index.html>

JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING MIGRATION BIRD WALKS

Saturday, April 14. Berners Bay Cruise. Meet at Statter Harbor (Auke Bay) by the Harbormaster's Office. The vessel will leave promptly at 8:30 a.m. Ticket holders should be on the dock by 8:15 a.m. Tickets are available at Hearthsides Books.

Saturday, April 21. Location: Mendenhall Dike trail and nearby wetlands. The walk will begin at the Radcliffe Road entrance to the wetlands at 8:00 a.m. Steve Zimmerman will lead the walk.

Saturday, April 28. Location: Boy Scout Camp area. The walk will begin at the Eagle Beach trailhead at 8:00 a.m. To get there drive out the road, take the first left after mile 27 (just before Herbert River) then turn right at the "T" to the gate at the end of the dirt road). People needing rides can be picked up at DeHarts at 7:30 a.m. Gwen Baluss will lead the walk.

Saturday, May 5. Location: Mouth of the Mendenhall River. The walk will begin at the Radcliffe Road entrance to the wetlands at 8:00 a.m. Bob Armstrong will lead the walk

Sunday, May 6. Berners Bay cruises: One will leave at 8:30 a.m.; the other will leave at 1:30 p.m. Meet at Statter Harbor (Auke Bay) by the Harbormaster's Office. Ticket holders should be on the dock by 8:15 a.m. or by 1:15 p.m. Tickets are available at Hearthsides Books.

Saturday, May 12. Location: Mouth of the Mendenhall River. The walk will begin at the Radcliffe Road entrance to the wetlands at 8:00 a.m. Mark Schwan will lead the walk.

Saturday, May 19. Location: Sandy Beach (Douglas). The walk will begin at the picnic area by Sandy Beach at 7:30 a.m. Paul Suchanek will lead the walk.

Saturday, May 26. Location: Perseverance Trail. The walk will begin at the end of Basin Road at 8:00 a.m. Beth Peluso will lead the walk.

Saturday, June 2. Location: Moose Lake/Dredge Lakes. The walk will begin at the parking lot by the bridge over the Mendenhall River along the Back Loop Road at 7:30 a.m. Bev Agler will lead the walk

Saturday, June 9. Location: Amalga Trail. The walk to the marsh where the rails have been found will begin at the Amalga Trail parking by the bridge over Eagle River at 8:00 a.m. Jeff Sauer will lead the walk.

TONGASS LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT

****Comments Due April 30**

The Tongass Land Management Plan is being amended to address inadequacies in the 1997 Forest Plan. This amendment is required by a 9th circuit court that ruled against the Forest Service. To access the plan and related documents on line, go to <http://tongass-fpadjust.net/index.htm>

Our preliminary review indicates the Forest Service has misrepresented facts, omitted important information, and made some serious errors in their analysis and recommendations. While it's unlikely the Forest Service will fix these mistakes based on public input, it is important to comment for the record if for no other reason than to provide a basis for litigation.

For those that wish to review our detailed comments, they will be posted on our website at www.juneau-audubon-society.org by April 15th. If you have questions about our comments, please e-mail the conservation chair at conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org.

The Tongass is our home. We encourage all members to provide input to the Forest Service on how they'd like to see the Forest Managed!

SKAGWAY BIRD CHECKLIST ON JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY WEB SITE

The 2007 Skagway Bird Checklist has been loaded on the Juneau Audubon Society web site at <http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org/Birds/Check%20Lists/SkagwayChecklist2007.pdf>

I have inserted links to the Skagway checklist on the JAS home page and the JAS Juneau Birding page. **George Utermohle, JAS Web Master**

REQUEST FOR BLUE GROUSE PHOTOS AND/OR INFORMATION By Fred Zwickel

Blue grouse have long been recognized as divided into two main groups, coastal and interior. These groups were recently diagnosed (2006) by the American Ornithologists' Union as separate species, Sooty Grouse (coastal) and Dusky Grouse (interior). One distinctive characteristic for separating the groups has been a difference in color of the bare neck patches (cervical apteria) of males when in display – yellow in coastal birds, red, or redish, in interior birds. This is noted in virtually all identification literature, including my own. Most of the popular field guides to birds (Peterson, National Geographic, and Sibley, among others) follow this tradition. SE Alaskan birds, are of course, 'coastal' and should have yellow apteria, but in at least some, do not. In other characters that tend to separate the two groups (kind of tail band, number of tail feathers, loudness of song, and number of syllables in the song, Alaskan birds conform to coastal birds to the south. Males on Queen Charlotte Islands have yellow apteria.

During a visit to Ketchikan last spring, it was brought to my attention that at least some males in SE Alaska have red apteria; confirmed by photos or other evidence from Gravina, Revillagigedo, Mitkof, and Admiralty Islands, and from Bartlett Cove. I am seeking copies of color pictures or other evidence of the color of cervical apteria of males from anywhere in Alaska. Locations are important and dates would be helpful (approximate dates ok). Note that red apteria result from flushing with blood, which tends to rapidly dissipate in dead birds, so that the skin becomes more flesh colored (pinkish yellow) when in the hand. Yellow apteria of coastal birds to the south reflect fat deposits, which do not tend to immediately dissipate in birds in the hand – apteria remain bright yellow.

I will reimburse anyone for duplication costs, phone calls, and postage for items received if you let me know what they are. All help will be greatly appreciated, and acknowledged, should this information be published.

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Southeast Alaska Regional Science Fair By Mark Schwann

The 2007 Southeast Alaska Regional Science Fair was held in Juneau on Friday and Saturday, March 16 and 17, at the Marie Drake Gym. One hundred and fifty-three students presented 133 projects, covering many scientific disciplines. The students are to be congratulated for their scientific curiosity, dedication, and hard work. Literally hundreds of volunteers from Juneau and elsewhere helped by mentoring students through their projects and judging the results at the fair. Many corporate sponsors made donations supporting the fair and additional corporations, organizations, locals businesses, clubs, and non-profit groups handed out prizes to students at the awards ceremony at the UAS Egan Library on Saturday evening.

Juneau Audubon supports the fair by way of awarding one or two prizes each year to students that present worthy projects that focus on animals and/or their habitats. Two Audubon board members initially screened the list of project titles and then reviewed the projects during the open house on Friday evening. On Saturday, our Audubon judges talked with and heard presentations by the students whose projects were of most interest, and then the winners were selected. This year we awarded two prizes; one went to Nick Parker for his study of the health and condition of mussels at local boat harbors, and the other to Jaspri Sylvan for her investigation of zooplankton near the Auke Bay Harbor. Both students gave excellent presentations, had a good grasp of their study, were

enthusiastic about their work, and completed projects representing good science. Each student received a 50 dollar cash prize and a certificate, which were presented by an Audubon board member at the awards ceremony.

WRANGELL REPORT By Bonnie Demerjian

Though daily snowfall has been making us despair of spring ever arriving, the calendar says it has. Soon to follow is Wrangell's Garnet Festival. The Festival celebrates the return of hooligan to the Stikine River and the eagles, seal, sea lions and gulls that flock to feed on them. The Stikine Delta is also a staging ground for thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl during this time and, in fact, the birds have just begun to arrive. Each year Wrangell's charter boat operators take schoolchildren to the delta to observe the birds, attempt to net hooligan and scour the sandy islands for signs of moose, wolves and other wildlife that use the habitat year round. The Forest Service is also offering activities for kids on archeology and building a birdhouse during the festival.

Featured speakers at the Garnet Festival this year are Juneau author and photographer Robert Armstrong and Karla Hart of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Watchable Wildlife Program. Karla will present a tracks and sign workshop and another on bears. A bird hike, "Breakfast with the Birds" is scheduled for Saturday, April 28 on the grounds of Muskeg Meadows Golf Course. Despite common assumptions about golf courses, this one is more than greens and sand traps. Ponds, beach, muskeg, old and second growth forest and wetlands provide habitat for a variety of birds. The Juneau Raptor Center will bring a couple of their birds to the festival and will be speaking with a number of school classes and community groups. Charter boat operators will be offering special tours of the delta.

Garnet Festival, earlier held during the third week of the month, has been moved to the last week in April and we hope the extra days will bring more birds our way. The Festival runs from April 25-April 29.

GUSTAVUS SIGHTINGS-- February 28 - March 26, 2007-- By Nat Drumheller

With all the snow and cold temperatures, birding was pretty slow this month. The exception was with owls. **Northern Saw-whet Owls** and **Northern Pygmy-Owls** were seen during daylight hours by many people through the period. There were eleven sightings of saw-whet owls and twenty one sightings of pygmy-owls. **Short-eared Owls** were seen regularly with most reports being of one or two owls hunting over the open areas south of town. Also reported were one **Snowy Owl**, one **Boreal Owl**, one **Barred Owl**, and several unidentified owls. Surprisingly, the only reports of owls hooting during this time period were of pygmy-owls on 3/14 and 3/18.

A few personal owl observations: On 3/8, I watched a raven pursuing a Short-eared Owl that was carrying a vole. The owl circled higher as the raven did aerial acrobatics below the owl and croaked. The owl dropped the vole and the raven caught it in flight. While moving firewood on 3/11, a fat vole scurried out from under the pile. A pygmy-owl snatched the vole from the snow three feet away from me. I am sad to say the vole screamed. The pygmy-owl landed in a nearby tree allowing me to be impressed by the large size of the prey compared to the tiny size of the owl.

On 3/13, I followed the sound of a scolding Steller's Jay and found several jays and magpies intent upon a saw-whet owl on the ground under a small tree. It was sitting on a vole that appeared to be frozen. I have read that saw-whets thaw frozen prey they've cached by sitting on it.

A few observations suggesting that we are on the edge of spring migration: **Common Redpolls** recently returned in small numbers after being absent for several weeks. **Trumpeter Swans** are being seen and heard more. A **Blue Grouse** was heard hooting on 3/20. Two **Lapland Longspurs** were along the beach on 3/26. **Black-billed Magpies** are flocking up in preparation for heading north. Also, the hybrid **Northern Flicker** survived the winter and continues to be seen around town.

Thanks to the many people who shared their observations.

SITKA REPORT By Matt Goff

Snow has continuously covered the ground in town this month, making it difficult for some birds to find food. Still, there are signs of spring. Some of the Song Sparrows and Varied Thrushes have begun to tentatively work on their songs, and the movement of birds has begun.

Two male Northern Pintails were briefly seen at Swan Lake in mid-March. Though one of the swans that have been wintering at Starrigavan died, more have shown up. There have been as many as 13, with reports of other swans in Jamestown Bay and Herring Cove. Well over 100 mostly Common Mergansers, with a fair number of Red-breasted Mergansers mixed in, were also seen at Starrigavan in late March.

Two big March events for birds in the Sitka area are the opening of the Long-line fishery and the start of the herring spawn. Both bring dramatic changes to the birds around town. With the long-line fishery opening in mid-March, the fish processors once again pump out an effluent rich in ground up fish carcasses. The gulls love this and are now in the channel in large numbers. These gulls have pushed out the Long-tailed Ducks that spent the winter in the middle of the channel. Mixed in with the more commonly seen gulls have been several Black-legged Kittiwakes, perhaps the first seen from town since last Fall.

The expectation of herring brings both gulls and eagles to town. It's not too hard to find trees near the shore with a dozen or more eagles perched in them. The late winter and continued snow has made things hard on these birds as well. There have been reports of an adult Bald Eagle that has turned to preying on other eagles. Many other eagles, weakened by lack of food, have been taken in by the Raptor Center for rehabilitation.

It's been an interesting year so far for Alcids. As late as the fourth week in March, there were two Horned Puffins at the north end of the channel. These are presumably same ones that have been seen since early February. Several Rhinoceros Auklets have also been seen in the waters close to town.

Other unusual sightings in March included an albatross reported from Thompson Harbor on the 13th and Snow Buntings along the shore north of Sandy Beach on the 22nd.

From Eaglechat: Beth Peluso, Juneau

I went to Tenakee two weekends ago and on the ferry ride over saw a number of murrelets, one of which already looked like it was in summer colors!

From my place on Douglas I saw a mix of birds on the water this weekend: common mergansers, goldeneyes, a few buffleheads, and a small flock of 5 or so surf scoters. The scoters seemed unusually active the males chasing each other around and a few looked like they were bobbing their heads up and down, I'm guessing showing off for the ladies.

And to top it off this morning I heard a junco trilling over by the pool parking lot. Maybe we'll have spring despite the snow!



Spring Birding Events in Ketchikan-by Teri Goucher

Spring has arrived in spite of numerous snow showers that gave Ketchikan several more days of wintry conditions.

A very early male **Red-winged Blackbird** was seen in town on March 17th!

A few **American Robins** have been here since mid-month and a flock of 20 was spotted on March 26th. Soon many large flocks will move northward all through Southeast Alaska.

Males are usually the first to arrive to begin setting up their territories for the breeding season and a few have already been heard singing here!

Gulls are migrating north now and a **Bonaparte's Gull** was seen in Cover Pass March 24th. There are quite a few more **Herring Gulls** around and even a **California Gull** was seen recently.

Seven **Trumpeter Swans** were seen flying north along the channel on March 25th.

Ketchikan will host the 12th annual Hummingbird Festival which celebrates the arrival of migratory birds to our area.

There will be fun activities all during April including workshops for kids and parents to create bird feeders and bird houses and a migratory themed art show.

Birding walks will be held April 13 & 14 at Ward Lake and Refuge Cove Beach guided by Cheryl Fultz and Teri Goucher.

Steve Heintz will lead a bird walk on April 29th around the Mountain Point boat launch area.

For more information about these events call the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center at 228-6220.

Although no Rufous Hummingbirds have been reported here yet surely they will show up soon along with many other migrating visitors as much awaited Spring warms Alaska after winter!!

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
A51

_____ Please bill me
7XCH

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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