

# 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 9

Juneau Audubon Society

May 2007

## **REGULAR AUDUBON EVENING MEETINGS WILL BEGIN AGAIN IN SEPTEMBER**

### **JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING MIGRATION BIRD WALKS**

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: Fish Creek. The walk will begin from the parking lot on the Town side of Fish Creek at 8:00 a.m.

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.

### **WEDNESDAY DOWNTOWN BIRD WALKS**

“Want to take a lunchtime break? Come join us at noon on Wednesdays for a 1-hour bird walk downtown. We’ll meet at Rainbow Foods for a walk around downtown. Bring binoculars if you have them and dress for the weather. Contact Beth Peluso for more details 957-1050.”

## Saturday Wild 2007

**Juneau Audubon sponsored natural history walks.  
Free and open to the public:**

**June 16** – Low tide walk 8:00 a.m. Indian Cove with Carol Thilenius.  
Park on Indian Cove Road. Go around house number 3186 to the left  
and WEAR BOOTS!

**July 21** – Alpine flowers and birds with Bob Armstrong. Meet at the tram  
at 8:00 am (special local rate)

**August 25** – Wild berries with Mary Lou King and Brenda Wright. Meet at  
the Eaglecrest parking lot 10:00 a.m.

Join us- weather or not- as we explore the wild side of Southeast Alaska.  
For more information on these free community walks, see  
<http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org> or e-mail [saturdaywild@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:saturdaywild@juneau-audubon-society.org).

**Please dress for the weather.**

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### **April 28 Audubon Bird Walk-- Cranes and bluebirds!**

**Posted by: "Gwen Baluss" in Eaglechat**

Things didn't look particularly encouraging as our group of 14 brave birders slushed along the still snowy trail in the chill drizzle of morning towards the boy scout camp. But it turned out to be a prime spring migration day!

Highlights:

6 Sandhill cranes flying over... followed by over 60 more who landed in the salt meadow for great views.

22 Mountain bluebirds, who milled around near us for over 30 minutes and were actually still there when we finally left. One actually landed on Jeff's tripod! (I figure this was my compensation for the many, many mad dashes I have made unsuccessfully seeking this "jinx" bird for me in AK)

Over 20 White-fronted geese, 6? Snow geese, 1 Cackling goose, 4 Golden-plover sp. (probably Pacific) Close views of Merlin, American kestrel and both male and female Northern Harrier and 4 Gadwall.

Also on the list: Ruby-crowned kinglet, Winter wren, Chestnut-backed chickadee, Savannah sparrow, Oregon junco, American pipit, Pine siskin, Lapland longspur, Red-winged blackbird, American robin, Varied thrush, Red-breasted sapsucker, Northwestern crow, Common raven, Horned grebe, Red-necked grebe, Pigeon guillemot, Bufflehead, Green-winged teal, Surf scoter, Barrow's goldeneye, Mallard, Red-breasted merganser, Canada goose, Bonaparte's gull, Herring gull, Glaucous-winged gull, Greater yellowlegs, Least sandpiper

**Posted by: "Paul Suchanek"**

It rained all day but a few photos were taken including an aerial of the cranes flying by, Juneau Audubon president Jeff Sauer ogling a couple of perched bluebirds lured in by his gloves, and another lured in by his tripod perch.

A few additional species seen: yellow-rumped warbler, northern pintail, American wigeon, mew gull, & common goldeneye.

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## **Posted by: "Beth Peluso" in Eaglechat-- Berners Bay Cruise**

I went out on the Audubon Berners Bay cruise April 14. Although it wasn't sunny, the water was calm and it didn't rain much, so we had some great wildlife viewing. Not much going on yet hooligan-wise in the bay itself, but in Lynn Canal we saw 4 or 5 humpbacks feeding, several fairly close. One was coming up on its back, so we could see its white belly as it rolled onto its side at the surface. There was a good crowd of Steller sea lions at the haulout on Benjamin Island, some HUGE bulls!

On the bird end of things, a first of season bird for me were the Bonaparte's gulls, some just changing into summer black head finery and some already fully there. Saw 2 or 3 oystercatchers, a large mixed flock of surf and white-winged scoters, a couple goldeneyes, some unidentified shorebirds that were either surfbirds or black turnstones (we couldn't get close enough to see), pigeon guillemots, and marbled murrelets still in winter colors. Gwen Baluss spotted a common loon and a Pacific loon. There were a couple high school soccer teams from Wyoming and Colorado on board, and they loved the half dozen or so bald eagles we saw. All in all a grand day!

## **BERNERS BAY CRUISES MAY 6 By Brenda Wright**

On our 12th annual trip to Berners Bay, Juneau Audubon came close to arriving on the big day for sea mammals and birds. With our long cold winter, the hooligan have not yet started up the river. So both trips to Berners Bay on 5/6 were treated to large rafts of sea lions, humpback whales and even a glimpse of sunshine. The wind was picking up, but Allen Marine supplied their biggest boat to take the bounce out of the waves. As usual, the trips sold out early and everyone enjoyed the volunteers from Audubon supplying information on birds, fish, and mammals. We hope you can come with us next year!

**Book Review: *Life Around Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau, Alaska* By Robert H. Armstrong and Marge Hermans**

Juneau Audubon Society members, Bob and Marge's new book is about the mammals, birds, and plants that you can see on the lands and waters close to Mendenhall Glacier. The more than a hundred wonderful colored photos and informative write-ups, make one want to go right out there and start looking more closely at this world around us.

***Dragons in the Ponds*** By Robert H. Armstrong, John Hudson and Marge Hermans  
This is a wonderful new book, for young people, about dragonflies. There are many large beautiful colored photos showing adult dragonflies and larvae as well as easy to understand scientific information.

***Northwestern Naturalist, A Journal of Vertebrate Biology, Spring 2007*  
Burr J Betts, Editor**

**EDITOR'S COMMENT ON WHETHER OR NOT TO USE CAPITAL LETTERS ON BIRD NAMES**

Anyone who paid even minor attention to the format and style of *Northwestern Naturalist* will note a change in this issue that is major enough to deserve some explanation. We are now capitalizing the English common names (vernacular names) of all species, but only when the complete name is used. For example, you will find in the 1st article in this issue references to both Common Ravens and just ravens.

Steve Herman, a current SNVB Trustee, broached the idea of capitalizing English common names with me last spring, and the SNVB Board and I discussed this issue twice before deciding to change our style. Although I was against the change initially, I investigated the style used by several other journals and tried to get information on why various journals follow their particular style. Bird journals like *The Auk* capitalize English common names, but oddly they don't capitalize the names of mammals, plants, and other taxa. Some herp journals capitalize and some don't. Mammal and fish journals as well as some broad-based natural history, ecology, and behavior journals generally don't capitalize any common names; however, some natural history journals follow the lead of the taxon in question by capitalizing herp and bird names but not those of other taxa.

Interestingly, most current editors do not know why their journals have the policy they have, but some past editors were helpful in this regard. Basically, ornithologists consider English common names as proper nouns. Also, they argue that capitalization helps avoid confusion, such as between 'Solitary Sandpiper' and 'a solitary sandpiper'. In the process of investigating this issue, I came to the conclusion that there were several good reasons to capitalize common names and no good reasons to continue not capitalizing.

So, the SNVB Board and I agreed that *Northwestern Naturalist* would capitalize all English common names., with at least three 3 reasons for doing so. 1) many common names already have a component that is a proper noun that refers to a person or place and is already capitalized (for example, Townsend's whatever, Columbian whatever, etc.), 2) the potential for confusion is eliminated, and 3) it makes it easier for a reader to find common names on a page.

#### **APRIL REPORT FROM KETCHIKAN** by Teri Goucher

The Spring days are longer and finally warmer as increased numbers of migrating birds continue to move northward again for the summer breeding season.

During the first week of April many waterfowl flocks flew by, sometimes their spring calling alerting anyone outdoors to look up to enjoy this inspiring seasonal spectacle! Hundreds of **Canada Geese**, **Greater White-fronted Geese** and good numbers of **Snow Geese** graced our skies!

Locally we have had the usual waves of dozens of **Fox Sparrows** and very high numbers of **Varied Thrushes** this spring. **Golden-Crowned Sparrows** appeared around mid-month along with a few **Savannah Sparrows**. Two **Band-tailed Pigeons** were seen at a residence at Herring Cove south of town on 4-13.

Shorebirds continue to migrate past including **Western Sandpiper**, **Least Sandpiper**, **Dunlin** and **Black-bellied Plovers**.

**Greater Yellowlegs** and **Killdeer** have been regularly seen and heard all along the road system. There have been several Killdeer nests found at various locations on our island the past few years and a Greater Yellowlegs nest was discovered not far from the airport on Gravina island last year.

Wishing you all a glorious summer enjoying our amazing gifts of nature here in Alaska or anywhere you may venture!

#### **WRANGELL REPORT** By Bonnie Demerjian

Black and white isn't just for formal wear. Quite a few of our most handsome birds sport those colors as well and, though there aren't a large number of species around just yet, some of our most well-turned-out birds are flaunting their contrasty plumage. The Bonaparte's gulls returned to the Wrangell area earlier this month. Their trim black-hooded bodies and querulous voices are a welcome harbinger of summer. Black turnstones with their vivid black and white wings are again scouring the beaches. A few of us were treated to a brief sight of snowy buntings grubbing on an ocean-side lawn one afternoon this month. "Bunt" means mottled in German but sporting their striking breeding plumage, these birds are natty at this time of year. After less than an hour these circumpolar breeders were on their way north. On the water, a large flock of cleanly patterned western grebes has been feeding in front of town, as have surf scoters, which have been missing in the past few years, and pigeon guillemots.

Color, however, is always welcome and so is the small flock of enthusiastically vocal red-winged blackbirds that always shows up in early spring. They don't remain long around Wrangell but do breed on ponds of the Stikine River delta. Another colorful and uncommon bird spotted this month was a mountain bluebird. It, too, only stayed around for a day but a flock of fifteen made a weeklong appearance near the open woodlands of the lower Stikine River this month before moving on. Another observer reported that Bohemian waxwings, in a reckless search for fruit, came to her front door and devoured the red berries trimming a wreath hanging there. The hungry bald eagles lurking in the trees during March left early this month for the Stikine hooligan.

It's good to hear the songs of fox, golden-crowned, white-crowned and song sparrows in the yard once again, but perhaps the most memorable sound in April was the massed calling of sandhill cranes as they navigated under a full moon toward their evening rest on the river flats. Hearing them, we understood that spring had arrived for certain.

**GUSTAVUS SIGHTINGS March 27 - April 30, 2007** By Nat Drumheller

It was a magical month. Around town, the deep snow has been reduced to patches. The first **American Robins** were seen on 3/27. A month later, birdsong greets the mornings and the beaches are crawling with shorebirds. New species for the season are being seen almost daily. Backyard feeders are alive with **Fox Sparrows** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**.

Gustavus saw its first **Rufous Hummingbird** on 4/14. Some other first sightings were: **Black-bellied Plovers**(5) 4/4; **Eurasian Wigeons**(6) 4/6; **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** 4/13; **Yellow-rumped Warbler** 4/19; **Least Sandpiper**, **Western Sandpiper**, and **Pacific Golden-Plover** 4/23; **Short-billed Dowitcher** 4/25; **Long-Billed Dowitcher** and **American Golden-Plover** 4/27; and **Townsend's Warbler** 4/28.



*Brewer's Blackbird*



*Leucistic Fox Sparrow*

A **California Gull** and a **Brewer's Blackbird** were seen on 4/18. A **Mountain Bluebird** and a **Golden Eagle** were seen on 4/25. **Cackling Geese** were seen on two dates in mid-April. Two color-banded **Dunlin** were seen in early April. Both were banded as juveniles in 2005 on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. A **Leucistic Fox Sparrow** was at a feeder for about a week. It was mostly white with brown splotches, primaries, and tail.

It was a hard winter for owls, judging by the number of dead owls found. This included several **Northern Saw-whet Owls**, a **Barred Owl**, a **Northern Pygmy-Owl**, and a **Short-eared Owl**. Somehow, others survived. Seen or heard this month were **Snowy Owl**, **Northern Saw-whet Owl**, **Western Screech-Owl**, **Great Horned Owl**, **Short-eared Owl**, and **Northern Pygmy-Owl**. **Northern Saw-whet Owls** are nesting in a nest box at a residence in town. This is a different box and location from that used by nesting owls last spring.

Thanks to Bruce Paige, Phoebe Vanselow, and John Olivit, for sharing observations and to all who reported owls. Thanks to Gus van Vliet and Cameron Eckert for confirming the Brewer's Blackbird. By Nat Drumheller, natdrumheller@hotmail.com

### **HAINES REPORT** By Georgia Giacobbe

We kept searching for signs of spring and, after April 15, many of us found them in the welcome return of many birds to the Chilkat Valley. The snow is rapidly melting but many deep spots remain throughout the valley. Fortunately, it did not deter several Mountain Blue Birds from returning to the Lutak Inlet area known as the “tank farm.” Last month a flock of Snow Buntings swept through the valley. In the last 10 days, we have had a couple of Rufous Humming Birds come to our feeder and at least two dozen Gold-crowned Kinglets have ravenously been feeding around our defrosted garden area. Several Northern Harriers have been competing with the Bald Eagles over the McClellan Flats area. And of course, Robins have moved back into the valley as well.

Elsewhere in Haines in the town area a Merlin was spotted flying overhead. Also spotted were two Vaux Swifts. In the Lutak Inlet abundant sea birds have gathered, namely a flock of Pintails and Barrow’s Goldeneyes, lots of Common Scoters, about a dozen Widgeons, half dozen Green-winged Teal. Several hundred gulls—namely Mew, and Glaucous-winged, among others are awaiting the new fish run--king salmon or later hooligan. As recently as April 29, some Harlequin Ducks and a Killdeer joined the birds in the inlet. Up the highway in the Klukwan area, Greg Higgins heard a few Great Horned Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls. In the Chilkoot Lake and River area Belted Kingfishers were spotted, along with American pipits, and a Snipe. The Blue Grouse could be heard drumming their song. The sights and sounds of spring are here. Now if only all the snow would go away.

## **THIRD ANNUAL JUNEAU AUDUBON BIRDATHON SATURDAY APRIL 15**

The Birdathon is an activity to help raise money for the Audubon Alaska Office by identifying birds for a designated amount of money for each bird found. The Juneau team this year was comprised of two groups who covered the area from Outer Point on Douglas Island to Eagle Beach and beyond. Team members were Paul Suchanek, Rich Gordon, Liz Blecker, Steve Zimmerman, Gus van Vleit, Matt Kirchhoff, and Ken Leghorn. The weather conditions were not wonderful but 103 species were counted.

**BACKYARD BIRD COUNT REPORT** *Janis Dickinson* | Director of Citizen Science | Cornell Lab of Ornithology, *Rob Fergus* | Senior Scientist: Urban Bird Conservation | National Audubon Soc.

This year, you helped create the most detailed snapshot of a continental bird-distribution profile in history. Your sightings are included among the record-breaking 11,082,048 birds reported during the four-day count. Participants from around the United States and Canada sent in 81,193 checklists, by far surpassing the previous record of 61,049!

**Please visit the GBBC web site at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>** to read a press release and summary about this record-breaking year, see a list of checklist champ and prize drawing winners, view results, and visit the photo gallery. We received nearly 5,000 photos and will continue posting them in the coming months. The photo contest winners will be announced after our panel has reviewed all the images.

This year's count was also the focus of numerous articles and broadcasts from media across North America! To see a USA Today article which talks about global climate change and highlights some of the results and photos from this year's count, visit [http://www.usatoday.com/weather/climate/globalwarming/2007-03-18-birds-winter\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/weather/climate/globalwarming/2007-03-18-birds-winter_N.htm).

Thank you for your participation in the Great Backyard Bird Count. We hope you'll join us again next year, February 15-18, 2008.

**GEAR UP FOR CITIZEN SCIENCE THIS SPRING AND SUMMER**

**Celebrate Urban Birds!** <http://www.urbanbirds.org/celebration>

Help scientists learn how birds use urban habitats by conducting a 10-minute bird watch for 15 focal bird species. Find out more at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Celebrate Urban Birds!" web site. People of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities can participate in a bird watch on their own or with local organizations. Other "celebration" activities include gardening, bird watching, art, and science. Learn more and request a free kit, while supplies last, at <http://www.urbanbirds.org/celebration>.

**eBird** <http://www.ebird.org>

If you enjoyed the Great Backyard Bird Count, we hope you'll continue entering your bird sightings in eBird, any day of the year. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird is fun, easy to use, and provides a year-round record of bird distribution for science.

**The Birdhouse Network** <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse>

Help cavity-nesting birds by putting up a nest box and sending your observations to The Birdhouse Network. Your data will help scientists learn more about breeding birds. For a live, virtual peek into birds' activities in nest boxes, visit Nest Box Cam at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/nestboxcam>.



## CONSERVATION

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Section 4(f) evaluation for improvements to the Juneau Airport was mailed out in late April. Numbering over 1,500 pages, the FEIS is a huge document. Because changes in public law have precluded the consideration of several runway safety area alternatives, many of Juneau Audubon's comments on that issue have been rendered moot. Potentially serious issues still remain, however, regarding the float plane woodlands and the wetlands.

To view the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Juneau Airport go to <http://www.jnu-eis.org/frames/FEIS.html> or if this doesn't work go to the airport web page [www.juneau.org/airport](http://www.juneau.org/airport) then to Ongoing projects on the left, then to second dot down to EIS, then to Documents, then to Final EIS (1st item), then for the short version, Executive Summary 3<sup>rd</sup> item down. The Summary has a little over 100 pages so takes time to download. On pages 52-54 is the preferred alternative for wildlife control as approved by the FAA.

A public information meeting will be held on May 14, 2007, between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. (ADT) at Centennial Hall, 101 Egan Drive, Juneau, AK 99801. A presentation on the FAA's preferred alternatives and key changes between the Draft EIS and the Final EIS will be provided at 6:30 p.m. (ADT).

The FAA is seeking comments on the Final EIS, with specific attention to those sections that have been substantively updated since publication of the Draft EIS. Comments on the Written comments should be sent to:

SWCA Environmental Consultants

ATTN: Juneau Airport EIS

257 East 200 South, Ste. 200

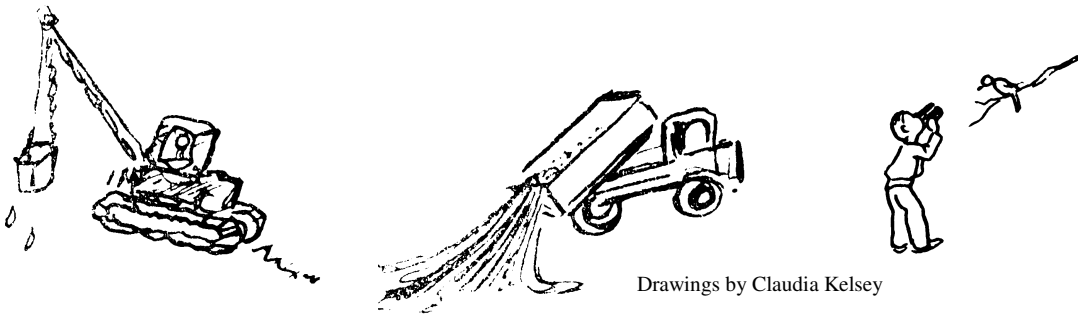
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111.

Electronic comments may be submitted via the EIS website at [www.jnu-eis.org](http://www.jnu-eis.org).

**All comments must be received no later than 5p.m. (ADT) on June 11, 2007.**

**In addition to the preferred alternative wildlife control, 21.4 acres of Airport owned wetlands would be filled and 4.1 acres of the State Refuge would be filled to extend the runway.**

Call Steve Zimmerman (586-2597) if you have questions.



Drawings by Claudia Kelsey

## 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**

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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 \_\_\_\_\_**

Officers, Committee Chairs, Events Coordinators

**President:** Jeff Sauer, [president@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:president@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Vice-President:** Mark Schwan, [vice-president@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:vice-president@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Secretary:** Patty Rose, [secretary@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:secretary@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Treasurer:** Liz Blecker, 586-4210, [treasurer@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:treasurer@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Programs:** Brenda Wright, 789-4656, [programs@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:programs@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Membership:** Meg Cartwright, 364-2258 [membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:membership@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Education:** Beth Peluso, [education@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:education@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Publicity:** Amy Skilbred, [publicity@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:publicity@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Conservation:** Matt Kirchoff, [conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Field Trips:** Steve Zimmerman, 586-2597, [field-trips@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:field-trips@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Raven Editor:** Mary Lou King, 789-7540, [raven@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:raven@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Public Market:** Ellen Anderson, 789-1412, [public-market@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:public-market@juneau-audubon-society.org)

**Web Master:** George Utermohle, [webmaster@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:webmaster@juneau-audubon-society.org)

JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY  
PO BOX 021725  
JUNEAU, AK 99802

Nonprofit Org.  
US Postage Paid  
Permit No. 153  
Juneau, AK 99802