

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

November 2007

Juneau Audubon Public Nature Series

Thursday, November 8, UAS Egan Room (221) (Glacier View) 7:00 p.m.

"Rowing, Sailing, & Hitchhiking in Cross Sound & Icy Strait" by Bridget Milligan. How I spent most of the summer on my old pine 20' rowing dory.

December 13, -- "Unraveling the Elusive Kittlitz's Murrelet" by Michelle Kissling; UAS Egan 221, 7pm

January 10, 2008 "Birding on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Wildlife Refuge" by Karla Hart; Place TBA, 7pm

OTHER HAPPENINGS IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA

HAINES - ALASKA BALD EAGLE FESTIVAL -- November 7 -11

Over 3,000 eagles gather along a four-mile stretch of the Chilkat River north of Haines, Alaska each fall to feed on a late run of salmon. This wildlife spectacle is the largest gathering of eagles in the world. The peak of the gathering usually occurs in mid-November. The festival is crammed with a full schedule of events catering to birdwatchers, photographers, and nature lovers. For more information, go to. <http://baldeaglefestival.org/> for call (907) 766-3094.

THANKSGIVING DAY BIRD COUNTS – 2007 The annual Thanksgiving Bird Count is rapidly approaching and will take place November 22nd. Thanksgiving Bird Counts are to take place on Thanksgiving Day, and to last for only one hour! The counter chooses the time that best fits his/her schedule. The count is to be made in a 15-foot diameter circle, the location of which also is determined by the participant. Such count circles are usually located around whatever attracts birds...feeders, bird baths, cover, etc. Most participants select a count area visible from a comfortable spot near a window. This is one winter count that can be made in comfort regardless of the weather. However, some counters do go outdoors and make their counts in favorite bird areas or on water areas. The same count circles should be used each year. The official data sheet is available on our web page at www.juneau-audubon-society.org or <http://iweb.tntech.edu/sstedman/ThanksgivingBirdCountForm.htm>

PUBLIC MARKET IN JUNEAU NOVEMBER 23-25, 2007 Juneau Audubon Society's annual fund raiser is our booth at the Juneau Public Market. Our biggest seller every year is our wonderful jelly/jams orchestrated by Mary Lou King. She not only picks the majority of the berries, but she also makes almost all the jam! Even if some of us had trouble finding berries this year, she has plenty of berries for jam!

We need volunteers for the booth. We like 2 people /2 hour shifts. Since the booth is open 12-8 on Friday and 10-6 on Saturday and Sunday, that means we need 24 volunteers to help us sell our wares during the weekend. If you are available to help, please call Liz at 586-2597 or send a message to public-market@ juneau-audubon-society.org

NEW BOARD MEMBER: My name is Brien Daugherty and I would like to introduce myself as a new Juneau Audubon Board Member in charge of Membership. I was born and raised here in Juneau and think Juneau is a wonderful place to live and raise a family. Regarding membership, I especially want to focus on introducing the Audubon Society as a valuable education resource to teachers and our student population. I look forward to my duties on the Audubon Board as a way to broaden my commitment to our community.

REPORT ON OUR REGULAR OCTOBER 11 AND OUR SPECIAL OCT. 25 MEETINGS

During the **October 11** meeting, Mike Jacobson showed several slides, he had taken several years ago when he was a government observer on a tuna fishing boat. His slides showed how they were beginning to save porpoises by manipulating the net as they were bringing it to the boat. Before this effort by the government the porpoise were killed and thrown overboard. Jim King showed a few old slides of the King Bird Farm and talked about the valuable things learned and birds sent to zoos and other places. Patty Rose showed some wonderful slides of the unusual birds seen around Juneau during this last year and several other folks showed slides of interesting trips. It was a great meeting.

JUNEAU - RATS! in the MARITIME REFUGE of ALASKA was the topic for the presentation by POPPY BENSON, Public Programs Supervisor at the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge in Homer, on **October 25**. The meeting was well attended and it was especially good to have a number of the members of Juneau High School's science class in attendance. She talked about how rats and birds do not mix, that Rat Island in the Aleutians Islands and in the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, has been infested with rats since 1780s when a ship wrecked there disgorging its rats on the Island where they have been multiplying ever since. Other Refuge islands also have rats that have decimated the nesting bird populations. Find out more, go to <http://www.stoprats.org/> and <http://alaskamaritime.fws.gov>

JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY SUPPORTS THE INSTITUTE FOR BIRD POPULATIONS Audubon Society's board has generously donated \$300 to the Institute for Bird Populations MoSI program (Monitoring Overwinter Survival). MoSI is a cooperative effort among organizations, researchers, and bird banders across the northern neotropics aimed at evaluating the quality of winter habitat for migratory landbirds. Since its initiation in 2002, data have been contributed from 153 stations operated in 15 neotropical countries. MoSI is designed to address monitoring, research, and management goals. The data will help provide estimates of annual survival rates, links between winter populations and breeding season vital rates, and evaluate management actions. For more information: <http://www.birdpop/MoSI/MoSI.htm>

JUNEAU BIRD OBSERVATIONS By Mark Schwan October 2007

The birding highlight in Juneau during the month was certainly the abundant and diverse showing of birds of prey, or raptors. At times there seemed to be Northern Harriers everywhere, and Short-eared Owls were seen with above average regularity. Birders enjoyed the repeated observations of Merlins, Northern Goshawks, and Sharp-shinned Hawks, and rarer species were also documented, as will be noted below. What follows is a listing of the more noteworthy sightings reported during the month.

Eight Canvasbacks at Auke Lake on 10/21 (GV) was perhaps a record high number for this species locally in the fall. A **Ruddy Duck** was located on a finger to the floatplane pond on 10/9 (MS,GV,MA,RG), and another, seemingly different bird was seen at Twin Lakes from 10/17 through at least 10/24 (LL,MS).

There must have been one or two **Ospreys** hanging around the wetlands for a while, as a pair was seen near the wetland dike on 10/4 or 10/5 (MA), and single birds were seen near the Bayview Subdivision on 10/8 and 10/9 (SZ); and two other reports came from the airport side of the wetlands on 10/9 (RG), and on 10/21 (GV). Two **Rough-legged Hawks** seen on 10/8 near entrance to the Mendenhall Valley (GV) and two juveniles seen later the same day on the wetlands (MA,PR) were perhaps the same birds; another was found at Cowee Meadows on 10/10 (GB). An immature **Golden Eagle** was circling low over the mouth of Eagle River on 10/2 (MS), one was seen at the Herbert Glacier on 10/4 (RG), and another was found scavenging salmon carcasses below the Eagle River bridge on 10/8 (MS). **Peregrine Falcons** continued to be found on the wetlands early in the month, with sightings on 10/1 and 10/6 (PR).

American Coots made a good showing at the usual locations, Pioneer Marsh, Twin Lakes and edges of the floatplane pond, during the month (many obs.) with up to 8 birds on 10/21 (GV). The only rare owl report came at the end of the previous month, when a **Barred Owl**, was seen and photographed on 9/30 at the Community Garden (DR,KT). While listening for owls at the Community Garden several days later, on 10/4, a **Common Nighthawk**, was heard repeatedly (MS).

A male, interior form, **Downy Woodpecker**, was spotted on 10/21 at the wetlands (GV), and another like individual was seen near the wetlands on 10/27 (RG). Although not considered a rare species for Juneau, an unusual Hairy Woodpecker, with a long, deformed crossed bill was observed at Eagle Beach on 10/16 (GB). Any **swallow** seen in October is worth noting, so though not identified to species, one seen near the scout camp on 10/20 was interesting (GB). **Mountain Bluebirds** made an appearance on several occasions during the first half of the month, with one female at the mouth of Eagle River on 10/2 (MS), another female on the wetlands on 10/7 (MS), and 6 on the wetlands on 10/9 (GV). Warbler sightings during the month included a single Orange-crowned Warbler at Eagle Beach on 10/8 (MS), and another near the wetlands on 10/27 (RG), and a single Yellow-rumped Warbler along the airport dike on 10/8 (RG), and one at mile 33 Glacier Highway on 10/21 (GV). Finally, there was a juvenile **Chipping Sparrow** at the wetlands on 10/21 (GV) and a reddish, interior form Fox Sparrow near the wetlands on 10/27 (RG). Thanks to those that provided information.

WRANGELL OBSERVATIONS By Bonnie Demerjian



We've been battered by weekly storms this past month, not ideal birding weather, but it's likely that those winds blew an unexpected visitor to Wrangell's shores. An aptly named Fork-tailed Storm Petrel, exhausted but otherwise uninjured, was brought in a box to the Forest Service office this past week. Biologist Melissa Cady accepted what she expected was yet another injured robin but was surprised and delighted to see that it was a petrel. Though common along outer coast waters, it usually takes a storm to bring one of these birds ashore this far inland and it may be the fact that they are poor walkers that necessitates human hands to launch them again once they've made landfall.

The bird was allowed to rest all day, and then taken to the beach for release. When box was opened the petrel posed for a few brief photos, then, to the cheers of onlookers, lifted up and sturdily flew away over the water and out of sight.

A small flock of Eurasian Wigeons was spotted on the Stikine River delta, as were Greater White-fronted geese (the speckled taiga form) and Snow Geese. Observers continue to report a larger number than usual of Harriers on the delta. A Black-billed magpie and a Great-horned owl are keeping the Benitzes company at their homestead on Farm Island on the delta. American wigeons, Ring-necked ducks, Mallards and Harlequin Ducks are now scouting the beaches and local ponds. Blue herons have also returned to Wrangell's beaches from wherever they go in spring and Pelagic Cormorants are still perched on pilings in front of town. Other returnees that haven't been seen until recently include Pine Siskins, Killdeer, Common Snipe and Varied Thrush. The latter have the concert stage nearly to themselves this time of year but are more tentative or perhaps unpracticed than spring singers. Are these first year males warming up for next spring or the past year's weary birds? Small numbers of Savannah sparrows and Golden-crowned sparrows are passing though. Some of us are warming up our feeders for the FeederWatch program. Wrangell's Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for December 15.

HAINES OBSERVATIONS By Georgia Giacobbe

If you are a raptor lover, then the Chilkat Valley has been the place for you this fall. Earlier in September, Tim Shields reported many raptors migrating through the Yukon in the Chilkat Pass area. Overall he has noted a wide variety, but specifically he spotted a gyrfalcon, juvenile Golden Eagle, a Merlin, Northern Harrier, and four or five Rough-legged Hawks. The last week of September in the lower valley, many Northern Harriers were migrating through. And one notable sighting was a Turkey Vulture at Mosquito Lake.

Throughout October, the rafts, and rafts of scoters continue to hang out in Portage Cove. Usually you will see them between the small boat harbor and the large cruise ship dock. With November approaching, we can't forget the bald eagles. Because the snow has not arrived (yet), they aren't as easily seen, but juvenile and mature eagles were hanging out in the trees and mostly scattered along the gravel bars from the fish camp at 4-mile through the fan at Klukwan and on at least to 33-mile on the Klehini River as of October 21. This last week of October, many from the lower valley have moved closer to the viewing spot at 19 mile Haines Highway. By Bald Eagle Festival time, their numbers should be peaking. The Bald Eagle Festival is scheduled for November 7 through 11 this year. Arthur Morris is the featured photographer and the Bald Eagle release is set for 1:30 p.m. on November 10. If you like entertainment, Al Batt will once again return and the band for Saturday night is the Alaska String Band. For more information on the festival, see www.baldeaglefestival.org.

NOTES ON SITKA BIRDS By Matt Goff

October saw the return of wintering waterfowl and the departure of the bulk of the remaining summer birds. Early in the month we were still seeing American Pipits and Savannah Sparrows plus a couple of non-wintering shorebirds, Spotted Sandpiper, and one Ruddy Turnstone that spent at least a couple of weeks at Totem Park. The first part of the month saw the return of Ring-necked Ducks, and Lesser and Greater Scaups to Swan Lake. An American Coot was seen on the lake by 9 October, and a second showed up a couple of weeks later. In addition, two American Coots were observed later in the month on Salmon Lake, not far from town. A Hooded Merganser was on Swan Lake early in the month, and one has been reported at Starrigavan more recently. 10 Common Loons and 50 Cormorants (mostly Pelagic) were observed just past the Rockwell Lighthouse on 9 October. Fork-tailed Storm-petrels have

been regularly seen in Crescent Bay, with some also reported from the mouth of Silver Bay. Red-necked and Horned Grebes have returned to the waters near the road system in small numbers. Several Wilson's Snipe have been popping up at Moller Field and around Swan Lake. Long-tailed Ducks have begun to return to the channel, though they are not yet there in the numbers usually seen in mid winter.

In addition to the return of our wintering birds, many others moved through on their way to regions further south. Of particular note were Yellow-rumped Warblers reported at Starrigavan, 70 American Wigeons at Totem Park on 18 October, several Northern Shovelers over several days on Swan Lake, many Green-winged Teal at Totem Park and Swan Lake, and lots of migrating geese, with both Canada Geese and Snow Geese specifically noted. On the morning of 22 October, over 1000 geese were seen flying south in several large flocks through the morning. Trumpeter Swans were first reported flying over on 25 October. Less common birds that have been reported this month include a Lapland Longspur, a probable Short-eared Owl, and two Merlins all on Alice Island. An immature Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen taking a Varied Thrush at Totem Park. An American Tree Sparrow at Moller Park track and another at Medvejie Fish Hatchery later the same day. 5 Brambling were reported with some Golden-crowned Sparrows at Moller Park. A Pied-billed Grebe on Swan Lake (for several days so far), and a 5 minute look at a Black-headed Grosbeak behind the Sheldon Jackson Museum.

GUSTAVUS SIGHTINGS August 30 - October 28, 2007 By Nat Drumheller

On 8/30, there were forty-two **Caspian Terns*** on the beach in town. Ten of the terns were juveniles. Also sighted on 8/30 was a juvenile **Brown-headed Cowbird**, adding to a couple of other sightings of juvenile cowbirds around that time. Five **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** were seen on 8/31 followed by **fourteen** on 9/1. **Stilt Sandpipers** continued to be seen in small numbers through 9/11 with five on 9/1 and 9/2. A **Red Knot** was with a few other shorebirds on 9/1. A dark morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was over town on 9/1. Twenty **Baird's Sandpipers** were seen on 9/4. A juvenile **Chipping Sparrow** was along a trail in town on 9/4 and 9/11. Migrating **Sandhill Crane** numbers peaked in mid-September. Single **Ospreys** were observed over town and in Glacier Bay's west arm on 9/16. Four **Cedar Waxwings** were in town on 9/18. **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were seen on 9/23 and 10/4. A **Mourning Dove** was at the airport on 9/25. More than twenty **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were west of town on 9/28. An eastern Red **Fox Sparrow** was at a feeder in town on 10/23. A first winter **Harris's Sparrow** was at a feeder in town on 10/24 and 10/25.

Thanks to Bruce Paige for sharing observations. By Nat Drumheller, natdrumheller@hotmail.com

*In an eaglechat post, I mis-read my field notes and put the total number of Caspian Terns at thirty-two by mistake. –ND

BOOK REVIEW By Jim King

Jim Rearden, Sam O. White, Alaskan – Tales of a Legendary Wildlife Agent and Bush Pilot, 2006. Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc. 410 pp. More than 70 photos.

Sam White had an inclination to tell stories and write them down even though the 7th grade was as far as his formal education went. He also had a compulsion toward public service. He was already a legend in the woods of western Maine as a logger, trapper and World War I hero when he came to Alaska at the age of 31 in 1922.

Sam served with distinction as a guide and packer and surveyor for the Coast and Geodetic Survey as they struggled with making the first contour maps of wild Alaska. In 1927 he became the first Agent in Northern Alaska under the Alaska Game Law of 1925, a formidable task in the essentially lawless wild lands where fortunes had been made by poisoning furbearers, selling wild meat and other practices that were destroying wildlife. He soon learned the futility of patrolling his vast district by dog team and polling boat and bought a little airplane. Sam White starting in 1930 was the first wildlife pilot in America and in fact the world, setting a standard still emulated by wildlife pilots everywhere.

Sam left government service in 1941 but continued to fly small planes commercially until past age 70. He kept diaries during these years and wrote letters and news stories now collected in the Historical Society Museum in Stratton Maine. He also wrote a number of accounts, often humorous, about people, events and places in Alaska that he had hoped to publish as a book.

Jim Rearden has done a masterful job of welding all this material into an account of the joy of participating in the life of Interior Alaska during the mid 20th century. It is a wonderful story, often in Sam's own colorful words, about physical efforts no longer required in modern Alaska.

Anyone captivated by the thrill of being an Alaskan will love this book about one who relished it to the hilt.

FROM NATIONAL AUDUBON'S TAKE ACTION CENTER

The Bureau of Land Management has renewed its attempt to drill for oil in one of the most sensitive and important wildlife habitats in the Arctic. We need your help to protect Teshekpuk Lake.

TAKE ACTION Contact the BLM today, and tell them to keep Teshekpuk wild and pristine: <http://audubonaction.org/campaign/tlakecomments/8w6kdd74v6bww53?>

Teshekpuk Lake is on the Coastal Plain of northern Alaska in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (or NPR-A for short), west of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The wetlands around Teshekpuk are a wildlife hotspot of global importance, providing habitat for:

- Tens of thousands of molting geese, including 30% of all Pacific Flyway Brant
- Threatened species like the Spectacled Eider and more than a dozen Alaska WatchList species, including the Yellow-billed Loon
- The Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd, an estimated 45,000 animals (Teshekpuk Lake is the herd's primary calving ground)
- Polar bears, especially on the Arctic Ocean shore

The NPR-A has been explored and developed for oil and gas for decades, but every U.S. President in NPR-A history, including Ronald Reagan, has protected Teshekpuk Lake because of its extraordinary importance to wildlife. But in January 2006, under President Bush, the BLM reversed this legacy of protection, opening every single acre of the Teshekpuk area to petroleum leasing. Only an 11th hour court ruling--the result of a suit brought by Audubon and other conservation groups--halted the lease sale in September 2006, days before the scheduled sale. Now BLM is at it again, with a new Environmental Impact Statement intending to pave the way for oil and gas leasing near Teshekpuk. Teshekpuk Lake is too precious to sacrifice when 87% of the Northeast NPR-A is open for leasing and nearly 1.5 million acres are already leased and actively explored for oil and gas. Drilling near Teshekpuk will not solve America's energy problems and will only contribute to greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming.

TAKE ACTION Speak up for Teshekpuk! The BLM is inviting public comment on oil and gas leasing in Northeast NPR-A, including the area around Teshekpuk Lake. Please contact BLM by November 6 and express your support for protecting Teshekpuk!

<http://audubonaction.org/campaign/tlakecomments/8w6kdd74v6bww53?>

The following three items came from What's UP. Peg Tileston, conservation person in Anchorage sends an extensive summary of environmental things of interest from all over the State. If you would like to receive this weekly What's Up, or to ADD meetings, events, publications, deadlines, websites, or CHANGE EMAIL ADDRESS OR UNSUBSCRIBE, contact Peg Tileston at 907-561-0540, FAX 907-563-2747 or pegt@gci.net.

ARCTIC OCEAN AND NORTH SLOPE MAP ATLAS 3RD EDITION is available at <http://www.northern.org/artman/uploads/arcticatlasoct.pdf>. The Map Atlas shows the sprawl of oil and gas leasing, exploration and development across the North Slope of Alaska and massive expansion of federal leasing by the Bush Administration across the Arctic Ocean including proposed Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193, planned Shell oil drilling locations in the Beaufort Sea off the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coast, and photos about failed spill drills and risks to polar bears.

What to **GET RID OF UNWANTED CATALOGS** in your mailbox? A new service set up by the Natural Resources Defense Council, National Wildlife Federation, and the Ecology Center called Catalog Choice can stop to all those unwanted catalogs. Since its debut last week, some 20,000 people have signed up for the service, already halting over 50,000 unwanted catalogs. That's a small fraction of the 19 billion catalogs mailed in the U.S. each year (made out of 53 million trees), but it's a start. Did we mention it's free? For more information or to sign up, go to <http://www.catalogchoice.org/>

****November 6 JUNEAU** - Deadline for comments on an application for an Alaska SHORT-TERM VARIANCE from WATER QUALITY STANDARDS for gravel mining in LEMON CREEK, Juneau, Alaska. The short-term variance would allow for operations resulting in temporary turbidity and sedimentation in excess of that allowed by the water quality standards for an annual total of 18 days during a 105 day operational period each year for possibly the next five years. The proposed short-term variance is associated with a request for a Clean Water Act 401 certification for a 404 dredge and fill permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. PERMIT NUMBER: POA-1983-20-N. For more information or to submit comments, contact Brenda Krauss at 907-465-5321, Fax: 907-465-5274 or Email: brenda.krauss@alaska.gov.

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

Name _____
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If you prefer to support Juneau Audubon Society only, please complete the form above and send \$10
(1-year membership) to: Juneau Audubon Society, Membership Chair, PO Box 21725, Juneau, AK
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To choose this option, write your email address here _____.

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