

# 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 Public Nature Series  
Thursday, March 13, UAS Egan Room 221/222 7:00 p.m.**

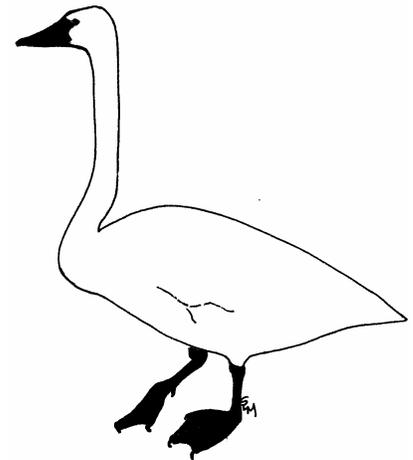
## **BIRDING SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa is the most "developed" country in Africa but has managed to conserve well managed large national parks which provide outstanding birding and wildlife viewing opportunities. Some of the unique habitats found in South Africa support a variety of plant and wildlife species found nowhere else in the world. Bev Agler and Paul Suchanek recently spent a month touring South Africa and observed nearly 400 species of birds and over 50 species of mammals. Join them for an exploration of some of these habitats and the wildlife ranging from penguins to parrots and whales to wildebeests.

## **TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY CONFERENCE AND THE SWAN FESTIVAL --WHITEHORSE, CANADA -- APRIL 17-19, 2008**

Whitehorse in April is a great experience. Nice paths on the bank of the mighty Yukon River a few steps from hotels, with flocks of migrating trumpeters and tundras overhead during the rapidly-increasing hours of daylight, will provide an unforgettable experience.

There are many possibilities for excursions including Skagway, Haines, Kluane National Park, dog-mushing, cross-country skiing and more! For information, check out Yukon Tourism at [www.travel yukon.com](http://www.travel yukon.com) or the City of Whitehorse visitor information at [www.visitwhitehorse.com](http://www.visitwhitehorse.com). For those interested in wildlife viewing, visit [www.environment yukon.gov.yk.ca/viewing](http://www.environment yukon.gov.yk.ca/viewing).



## **KODIAK HUMMINGBIRDS**

Below is an interesting article from Kodiak on hummingbirds that have reached Kodiak in the recent past. In southeast Alaska we have plenty of Rufous Hummingbirds from early spring through the summer. And they are coming! Gus Van Vliet suggested to check out the following web site on the timing of the migration north of some North American birds including our Rufous Hummingbird. [www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/Maps.html](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/Maps.html) and [www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/current.html?layers=hbird\\_rufous](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/current.html?layers=hbird_rufous) for Rufous.

We also do occasionally get Anna's Hummingbird in the fall and we have had a single instance of a Costa's Hummingbird. (Information from Gus). A great example of this was this past fall when Patty Rose diligently kept a hummingbird feeder clean and filled right into November. One might first think that such behavior was bizarre, but in fact she was rewarded with a beautiful male Anna's Hummingbird in mid November! It stayed for several days. Its eventual probable fate can be gleaned from Rich MacIntosh's primer regarding hummers that reach Kodiak.

### **A Kodiak Hummingbird Primer (2006) -- by Rich MacIntosh, Kodiak Audubon - Bird Sightings Chair**

Ah....where to begin? While we (Kodiak) are at the absolute fringes of hummingbird distribution in North America, hummingbirds are reported here almost every fall (and very rarely in spring/summer). The vast majority of these hummers are Rufous Hummingbirds that stray southwest from breeding populations as near to us as Prince William Sound and Girdwood. Rufous Hummingbird is the only hummer that breeds in Alaska. Just about all hummers seen in Kodiak are immature birds, with negligible migration experience under their belts. What this means is that the easier to identify adult male hummingbirds with the bright red or purple throats (gorgets) are seldom seen here. Rufous Hummingbirds in any plumage are relatively easy to distinguish from other species that might occur here, because they are the only ones with rich buffy-orange on the under parts and in the tail. These colors are fairly easy to see as a bird hovers or sits on a perch.

Hummingbirds that are *not* Rufous Hummingbirds are reported less than annually on Kodiak, and almost all of them go unidentified to species. For the purposes of this discussion, I will collectively call these birds green hummers, as they are green above and pale gray below, with very little or no buffy-orange on the under parts and tail. To get an idea of what these green hummers might be, I will list the green species that have been documented in the State of Alaska (although an entirely new species could occur):

Ruby-throated Hummingbird - There are two or three records of this eastern US hummer in the state.

Anna's Hummingbird - Although it breeds only as far north as southern British Columbia, a few wander north in the fall to southeastern Alaska, and it has even occurred as close to us as Homer. Virtually all hummingbirds at southeastern Alaska feeders in fall/winter are Anna's.

Costa's Hummingbird - Although it is a resident of the southwestern deserts of the US, Costa's has strayed to Alaska about eight times including two times to Kodiak! This, then, is the only hummer on the Kodiak bird list other than the Rufous Hummingbird. Both Kodiak occurrences were well documented by photographs. The first occurrence (an immature male with a partially purple gorget) was in Shari and Jack Doyles's yard in Bells Flats in September of 2003. The second is a bird that was in the Deedie and Jim Pearson yard since 26 August (this Kodiak primer was published in 2006)

and at the time of the newsletter was still coming to the feeder there.

The next green hummer in Kodiak will probably be one of these three species. Because they are difficult to identify, it is very important that any green hummingbird, or in fact any hummingbird, be videotaped or photographed. We are overdue for Anna's Hummingbird in Kodiak. Maybe you will photograph the first one!

Your best chance of luring hummingbirds to your Kodiak yard is to plant lots of nasturtiums and other flowers like petunias and fuschias that bloom into fall. The vast majority of Kodiak hummers are seen at nasturtiums. Few people go to the trouble of putting up hummingbird feeders here, but as the Pearson's case shows, a feeder placed next to blooming flowers can attract and hold a hummingbird in a yard after the flowers are gone. This brings up an interesting question about the fate of Kodiak hummingbirds and the advisability of feeding them. It is my opinion that any hummingbird that makes it to Kodiak is doomed. Most of them arrive here in very late August or September, when natural sources of nectar are scarce. This is why they are almost always seen in ornamental flower gardens. For a bird to reverse course, and fly back across the ocean in the direction from which it came, *and* find adequate food along the way, seems highly unlikely. So I say, if you manage to lure a hummingbird to your yard by whatever means, keep it there as long as you can, enjoy its beauty, and marvel at its ability to have gotten here in the first place!

Thanks to Rich MacIntosh of Kodiak for this article and to Gus VanVliet for his fact checking, and the Juneau hummer info. Jeff Sauer

### **WRANGELL BIRD WATCH** By Bonnie Demerjian

**Common redpolls** irrupted in Wrangell in mid February. They were first reported on February 7 when an individual redpoll perched on the observer's young granddaughter. It appeared at a feeder along with a flock of **Chestnut-backed chickadees**. By the following week (2/11) several flocks of 40 or more were reported. It's always a treat to see a single Common redpoll here usually lurking among **Pine siskins**, so seeing this unusual irruption has been a welcome addition to our usual winter residents.

Also of interest and spotted during the Great Backyard Bird Count (2/15) were a small flock of 18 **Black turnstones**, along with 3 Killdeer.

Individual **White-crowned, Harris', White-throated and Golden-crowned sparrows** have continued to visit local feeders all month.

**Red-breasted sapsuckers** were reported by two observers in different locations on 2/6 and 2/8. It seems early for them but we aren't complaining.

Earl Benitz on the Stikine flats has been carrying on a conversation with two **Great Horned Owls** that are hooting around his cabin. He says they have not appeared to settle on a nest site yet though they have nested nearby several years in the past.

## JUNEAU BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS FOR FEBRUARY By Paul Suchanek

Cold weather limited birding effort in early February but much milder weather over the weekend of the 15<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> provided birders a great opportunity to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Although not all GBBC checklists may yet be in, birders in the Juneau (including Auke Bay) area turned in about 50 checklists and reported about 60 species. The checklists documented well an invasion of redpolls and siskins which has built up through the winter in Juneau. Common Redpoll was the most often reported species with a tally of over 1,800, while about 1,700 Pine Siskins were reported (by contrast, in 2007 only two siskins were reported in Juneau). You can look more closely at the results for Juneau, Alaska, or the entire nation at: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

Continued overwintering of a few American Robins, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Eurasian Wigeons, Rusty Blackbirds, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Western Grebe (Auke Bay GBBC), and a Varied Thrush were also reported on the GBBC or Eaglechat. A few **Hoary Redpolls** were also reported on the GBBC. In a large flock of Mallards near the mouth of Fish Creek on February 8, I managed to spot a hybrid Mallard X Northern Pintail male. A “new” extremely rare overwinterer (or early migrant?) reported during February was a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at a feeder in Auke Bay from February 5-10 (Mark Schwan). This species is often one of the earliest migrants back to the Juneau area but normally first show up about mid-March. After an often cold and snowy winter, I’m sure Juneau birders will be looking forward to those first March migrants, a sure sign of spring.

### HAINES REPORT – Georgia Giacobbe

According to the online reporting of February 23, there were fewer birders participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count than there were for the Christmas Bird Count. But some, like myself, were able to participate from the comfort of my own home by watching the birds in my yard that we feed. The results so far are Trumpeter Swan, 5; Common Goldeneye, 12; Bald Eagle, 19; Black-billed Magpie, 10; Northwestern Crow, 6; Common Raven, 32; American Dipper, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 35; Common Redpoll, 6; Stellar’s Jay, 5; Song Sparrow, 65; and Dark Eyed Junco, 1. Out of the 10 checklists reported, 8 of the 10 had crows and 7 of 10 had eagles, no surprise for here.

Although not reported in the GBBC, a Sharp-shinned Hawk was observed in the Muncaster Rd area of Haines. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> out at Lutak Inlet near the ferry terminal, the inlet was so flat and calm that half a dozen Red-breasted Mergansers, several Buffleheads and Goldeneyes were swimming through. Three Stellar Sea Lions also made an appearance. On a drive up the highway on February 23, however, I saw 6 Trumpeter Swan—a pair at 16 mile, pair at 17 mile, and a pair at 19 in the Chilkat River. There were a few ducks, and the solitary local eagles more like sentinels in the trees every few miles along the road. Haines has had a bit of a February thaw—most are looking forward to an early arrival of spring birds.

## KETCHIKAN REPORT FOR FEBRUARY-By Teri Goucher

Our island enjoyed a few days this month that hinted of the arrival of Spring although several storms left between 3 and 10 inches of snow at sea level as winter persisted.

A pair of **Wood Ducks** showed up at a home north of town for a few days to snack on some bird seed and a lone female wood duck was seen pursuing a more natural diet at Knudson Cove.

A couple of **American Tree Sparrows** were spotted on opposite ends of our road system! A **White-throated Sparrow** and a **Harris's Sparrow** have remained wintering here in the same areas all season. Normally the 'red' or 'taiga' **Fox Sparrow** is found in more inland areas than our common 'sooty' or Pacific race, but a few sightings have occurred here this winter.

Amazingly the female **Anna's Hummingbird** continues to endure our rather harsh winter with the help of a well supplied nectar feeder!

Quite a few large flocks of nomadic **Pine Siskins** have finally made their winter appearance here recently. Most people are familiar with these busy, delightfully noisy brown streaked birds that flash the yellow patches in their wings and tails as they quickly move about. Siskins have a much thinner bill than most finches and eat mostly seeds and are particularly attracted to thistle seed feeders. They seek their mates in the winter flocks of sometime hundreds of birds when courtship begins in January and February. So listen for the buzzy chatter of siskins the next time you're outside on a quiet winter day and know that indeed Spring is on the way!

### GUSTAVUS SIGHTINGS January 31 - February 23, 2008

Gustavus came up with only 58 species during this year's Great Backyard Bird Count. Bad weather and low participation meant that some species were missed during the count. (The current online total for Gustavus shows 59 species tallied, but Black-capped Chickadee will be removed and added to the Chestnut-backed Chickadee number.) The only rarity seen during the count was the **Brambling**, which continues to come to a feeder in town.

**Great Horned Owls** continued to be heard in several areas through the month. Single **Short-eared Owls** were seen over beach grasslands on a handful of dates. One **Snowy Owl** was seen on 2/3 east of town along the base of Excursion Ridge. A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was in town on 2/17.

**Northern Saw-whet Owls** began hooting on 2/18 and had been heard at three locations by 2/19. Two saw-whet owls were heard vocalizing near a residence in town on 2/22, and one owl was observed via a nest-cam inside a nest box at that location on 2/23. The **Northern Flicker** showing traits of red-shafted and yellow-shafted varieties continued to be seen at feeders through the period. Two **White-crowned Sparrows** continued to frequent a feeder in town. Two **American Robins**



*Brambling – Photo by Nat Drumheller*

were in town on 2/22. A **Horned Lark** seen regularly along the beach was last seen on 2/3. **Pine Siskin** and **Common Redpoll** numbers increased during the second half of February with flocks of each species being seen regularly. On the afternoon of 2/18, a **Northern Shrike** was singing along the beach east of town, making this the third GBBC during which I have witnessed a shrike singing.



Thanks to Nate Borson, Jim Martell, Phoebe Vanselow, and Julie Vathke for sharing observations. By Nat Drumheller. natdrumheller@hotmail.com

#### **BOOK RIVIEW** By Mary Lou King

***GARDENING IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA*** By members and friends of the Juneau Garden Club This 230 page 3<sup>rd</sup> edition book (revised in 2008), is outstanding. New to this edition are 150 beautiful photos of flowers, vegetables and gardens of all varieties. Approximately 30 gardeners (many of them new in this edition) from northern to southern Southeast, contributed their knowledge of successful gardening.

Thanks to the hard work of many Garden Club Members and all the contributors, everything you could ever want to know about the what, why, where, when, and how to garden in Southeast Alaska can be found in this book. I am sure your favorite book store can get this book for you if they do not already have it in their store. Retail sales distributions are handled by Todd Communications in Juneau; contact James Brawley, 586-8633.

**ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PERMIT APPLICATIONS – to see full permits go to:**  
<http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/PNNNew.htm>

#### **JUNEAU**

**Gasineau Channel off Crazy Horse Drive – POA-2007-1705-4.** John an Sharon Mallinger's purpose is to provide secure and convenient boat storage facilities (boat condominiums) for private ownership with 11 buildings with 10 units each. They propose to fill 3.92 acres of waters of the United States, including wetlands and .59 acres below high tide line. **Juneau Audubon is concerned about this proposal in an area that drains into the Mendenhall Refuge – comments will be submitted to the Corps.**

**Berners Bay – POA-2008-52. Expiration Date March 5.** Channel Construction, Inc. proposes to construct a commercial barge ramp "to allow the export of construction materials from nearby sites to other locations in SE Alaska."

**Update on Cascade Point in Berners Bay** by Rob Cadmus, SEACC -- Located on the southern end of Berners Bay, Cascade Point is near an important spawning area for Lynn Canal Herring. Herring are a vital food source to salmon, whales, sea lions, birds, and more. Coeur Alaska has changed its plans for accessing the Kensington Mine and will be using an existing marine terminal near Yankee Cove rather than developing Cascade Point. This is good news for Berners Bay, but Goldbelt Corporation, the owners of Cascade Point, has new plans. Permit applications have been submitted for a barge loading ramp (placing 2,000 cubic yards of shot rock below the high tide line, on top of what is already there) at Cascade Point to transport rock, fill, and construction material for the proposed Juneau Road extension and other developments. With a mine, road, and marine terminals being proposed or built in Berners Bay concerns about the cumulative impacts these developments will have on the area's spectacular resources are growing. The Army Corps of Engineers will be taking comment on the proposed Cascade Point loading ramp until March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Go to <http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/PNNNew.htm> to see the full Corps Permit Application.

#### **KETCHIKAN**

**George Inlet—POA-2007-1717-2. Expiration Date March 20.** Oceans Alaska proposes to build a marine research facility and aquarium. They propose filling 1.36 acres of wetlands and .22 acres of intertidal lands.

**Ward Cove – POA-2008-43-2. Expiration Date March 19.** Power Systems and Supplies Alaska proposes to build a storage and transfer facility for shipping of materials to remote locations, utilizing landing craft. They propose to fill .22 acre below high tide with shot rock and riprap.

**Tongass Narrows – POA-2008-103-1.** Bertha Hussman proposes to build a private recreational dock.

**Herring Bay – POA-2008-101-1.** Andy Rauwolf proposes building a private dock at their residence.

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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*.

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### Local Audubon Society Membership Application

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 99802. You will receive the Juneau Chapter news letter *The Raven*.

**\*\*\*Please consider getting *The Raven* by e-mail instead of snail mail to save paper, time, and money. To choose this option, write your email address here \_\_\_\_\_.**

