

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 34, Number 9

Juneau Audubon Society

May 2008

WEDNESDAY NOON BIRD WALKS -- Need a break from the office? Join the Audubon Wednesday Bird Walks from noon to 1:00 starting May 21. Beginners and visitors are welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them and dress appropriately for the weather. Meet outside the Hangar restaurant in the blue Wharf building downtown. Contact Beth Peluso for more information 957-1050.

SUNDAY, MAY 18 -- at the Community Garden on the Montana Creek Road, 8-12, bird-banding demo and various celebrations for International Migratory Bird Day. For more information: Gwen Baluss gwenbaluss@yahoo.com

THURSDAY, MAY 29 – SLIDE SHOW AND BOOK SIGNING --Guide to the Birds of Alaska 5th edition by Bob Armstrong will be available this month. The features of this edition include hundreds of new photographs plus photos of all the casual and accidental birds. This 2008 edition also incorporates all the changes in names and systematics made by the American Ornithological Union since the last edition in 1995. With the help of Thede Tobish all of the status and distribution charts have been updated. Bob will present a slide show and book signing at Hearthside Books on May 29th at 7 p.m.

SATURDAY Bird Walks Juneau Audubon, Spring 2008

Spring is here and so too are the birds!! We encourage all to attend our walks. No experience is necessary. In fact, this year we will have two leaders on each walk, with one leader for less experienced birders. Bring binoculars if you have them. We will have a few on hand for those without binoculars. We also will have spotting scopes for use by all.

Saturday, May 10. Location: Airport Dike. Walk to the mouth of the Mendenhall River. The walk will begin at the Radcliffe Road entrance to the wetlands at 8:00 a.m. Wear rubber boots. Mark Schwan will lead the walk. Jeff Sauer will assist.

Saturday, May 17. Location: Airport Dike. The walk will begin at the Radcliffe Road entrance to the wetlands at 8:00 a.m. Jeff Sauer will lead the walk.

Saturday, May 24. Location: Sheep Creek. Meet at Sheep Creek trail head at 8:00 a.m. This will be a bird walk/ hike with a long uphill walk. Emphasis on learning basic bird songs, by listening to the birds, as well as to the birds on tape (CD player). Beth Peluso will lead the hike. Patty Rose will co-lead.

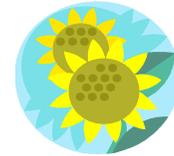
Saturday, May 31. Location: Eagle River Trail. Meet at Eagle River Trail Head at 8:00 a.m. This will be a bird walk/ hike to the marsh to listen for soras and rails, Common Yellowthroat should be seen

also. Trail head is at the parking lot by the bridge over Eagle River. Jeff Sauer will lead the walk, with assistant. Hiking boots or walking shoes.

Saturday, June 7. 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. Note earlier start time than other walks. Wear rubber boots. Bev Agler will lead the walk, with assistant.

Saturday Wild 2008 - Juneau Audubon sponsored natural history walks. Free and open to the public:

June 21 - Wildflower walk at Eagle Beach state park 9:00am



July 19 - Alpine flowers and birds with Bob Armstrong and other plant and bird experts. Meet at the tram at 8:00 am (special local rate)



August 23 - Edible wild berries
Location to be announced



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. Please dress for the weather.

.....

SATURDAY, JUNE 21 AT 3 P.M. – Ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the reopening of the Perseverance Trail at the Trailhead at the end of Basin Road. Trail Mix hopes you will join all those who made this project possible including U.S. Senator Ted Stevens and Alaska State Parks Director James King.

HOTSPOTS FOR SUMMER BIRDING By Beth Peluso

'Tis the season of travel, when Audubon starts receiving lots of requests from visitors. If you have birder friends visiting Juneau, or if you just want to go yourself, here are some of the "hot spots" people can visit if they have even just a few hours. Of course there are other spots if people have more time!

First, if your guests are planners, before they even arrive they can check out the local birding listserv "Eaglechat", which you can sign up for on Yahoo Groups. It's a good way to learn what birds are around and where people are seeing them.

From the docks downtown you can usually see several species of gulls and occasionally harlequin ducks (especially by the Gold Creek outlet into Gastineau Channel). Marbled murrelets are locally common but endangered in the Lower 48, so listen for their "clear, clear" calls in Gastineau Channel and you might even see them downtown.

The Mt. Roberts Tram (downtown by the cruise ship docks) is a great, quick way to get into the subalpine. The tram costs about \$25 roundtrip, but you can also do the moderate hike up from the trailhead on 6th street; if you buy \$5 of whatever at the restaurant or gift shop you can take the tram down for free. Lots of fox sparrows and Wilson's warblers flit through the shrubs. There's a short loop trail near the tram building, or a more strenuous hike takes you up to the top of the ridge. There are usually ptarmigan and sooty grouse (the recent new name for blue grouse) with chicks right near the trail up to the ridgeline by the beginning of July. If it's clear, there's a great eagle's-eye view of Juneau.

You can take the city bus to within a mile of the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, if you don't have a car. Arctic terns nest in the sand along the banks of the lake, and you really can't beat the view of the glacier. The Moraine Ecology trail is good for warblers and other small songbirds and sometimes Harlequin and merganser ducks in the beaver ponds. There are bears, especially in July when the salmon run starts. Tell your guests to be alert and make sure they know how to stay safe in bear country. Last summer a mother black bear and her two cubs fished near one of the viewing platforms most of the summer, which was fantastic! If that makes your guests nervous, stay out along the lake and the paved trails and you'll be fine.

Although the Airport Dike Trail requires a car, it's a great place to see grassland birds like Lincoln's and Savannah sparrows, as well as lots of warblers in the trees and shorebirds in the ponds by the gazebo. The wetlands are a state game refuge, so you can walk out on them, but waterproof shoes or boots are highly recommended. Make sure your guests know to pay attention to tides. There are great mud flats at low tide, but the water comes in faster than you might think if you aren't used to tides. Tide books are available from Western Auto and other places around town.

If folks in other Southeast Alaska communities have local hot spots visiting birders can get to quickly and easily, please send a short write-up to Beth Peluso through the board list on the Juneau Audubon website. Enjoy your summer visitors!

JUNEAU BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS DURING APRIL By Mark Swan

As the month was ending, spring migration appeared to be finally gaining momentum. Perhaps the cold weather through most of the month delayed the arrival dates of a variety of migrants, as the numbers and diversity of species seemed low compared to most years, especially for shorebirds and songbirds.

Here are a few highlights. No one will be surprised to note who spotted most of these birds. Three **Brant** at Point Bridget on April 25 were a surprise find, as they represented the first April record for the park area (PS). A "**Common**" **Teal**, the old-world subspecies of Green-winged Teal, was found at the mouth of Eagle River on April 27 (PS, BA). A single male **Canvasback** spotted on April 19 (PS) and again on April 21 (MS) was a nice addition to the mix of more common waterfowl at the "gazebo" pond adjacent to the airport dike. It

was highly unusual that two **Rough-legged Hawks** were found within two days, one light-phased bird on the wetlands on April 19 (GV) and a dark-phased individual at Point Bridget on April 21 (PS). This species is quite rare in Juneau during the spring. Rare along the Juneau mainland, an immature **Double-crested Cormorant** was a good find at Point Bridget on April 21 (PS). The only gull highlight of the month was the relocation of our local celebrity, the **Lesser Black-backed Gull**. The bird was first seen at the mouth of the Mendenhall River with the mix of common gulls on April 15 and seen subsequently in the same area, at Fish Creek, and then near month's end at the gull colony near the Mendenhall Glacier (PS, MS, BA, GV). This bird, if it is the same individual local birders have been seeing for years now, was first seen in 1992 as an adult bird; this would mean the bird is at least 20 years old.

Shorebirds were strangers to local habitats through most of the month, but two **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were a good find on the wetlands on April 28 (PS) and an estimated **1,000** Surfbirds at Outer Point on April 29 was an impressive showing (PS). Migrant passerines also were slow to materialize. Two **Horned Larks**, a species that can easily be missed by birders, were found on the wetlands on April 20 (PR). Finally, two reports of **Mountain Bluebirds** came in during the month. Always a treat to see, five birds were found at Point Bridget on April 21 (PS) and a single male was seen at the Mendenhall wetlands on April 26 (LC).

Contributors: Bev Agler, Laurie Craig, Patty Rose, Paul Suchanek, Mark Schwan, Gus van Vliet.

**Report Posted on Eaglechat by: "Paul Suchanek"
Sat Apr 26, 2008 5:12 pm (PDT)**

The morning Audubon walk at Fish Creek was very productive as the weather and birds both cooperated well. Ruby-crowned kinglets were foraging everywhere in the alders with some singing. Less than 100 yards down the trail, a red-breasted sapsucker flew in and gave everyone outstanding looks. There were lots of waterfowl in lower Fish Creek and easily seen through the abundant shared scopes. On the way back, a black oystercatcher came across the bay and landed near the group for a rare look at this species on the Mendenhall Wetlands. Near the gate, a singing Townsend's warbler was seen by one or two and heard by others and everyone got to see at least one singing male yellow-rumped warbler. Following is a list of species:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Mallard | Red-breasted sapsucker | Golden-crowned sparrow |
| Green-winged teal | Hairy woodpecker (heard only) | Pine siskin |
| Gadwall | Northwestern crow | |
| American wigeon | Raven | |
| Northern shoveler | Steller's jay | |
| Northern pintail | American dipper (from
bridge after walk) | |
| Surf scoter | Winter wren (heard
only) | |
| White-winged scoter | American robin | |
| Barrow's goldeneye | Varied thrush | |
| Common goldeneye | Golden-crowned kinglet | |
| Red-breasted Merganser | Ruby-crowned kinglet | |
| Red-necked grebe | Chestnut-backed
chickadee | |
| Common loon (eating a fish) | Yellow-rumped warbler | |
| Bald eagle | Townsend's warbler | |
| Black oystercatcher | Song sparrow | |
| Glaucous-winged gull | Fox sparrow | |
| Herring gull | | |
| Bonaparte's gull | | |
| Mew gull | | |



*Coyote Photo taken by Paul Suchanek
at Pt. Bridget on April 25*

WRANGELL -- May 2008 Submitted by Bonnie Demerjian

Spring is arriving in fits and starts this year and this may be the reason that birds have been doing the same, at least here in Wrangell. Single singers appear one day, not to be seen or heard again for weeks. Normally accompanying the opening blueberry flowers, this year's first **Rufous hummingbird** was reported on April 5 but only around the 15th did a scattered number begin to appear. The first **Fox sparrow** was also reported that day but again they have not yet arrived in any number. A lone **Ruby-crowned kinglet** was heard on April 4, then not again until the 14th and still they are scarce. Feeder watchers are still reporting large numbers of **Pine siskins** with a few **Common redpolls** intermixed. A pair of **White-throated sparrows** appeared at one feeder in mid month. A single **Spruce grouse** hooted on April 4 and a single early **Tree sparrow** was spotted at the golf course on April 14. The welcome song of several **Red-winged blackbirds** was heard at feeders mid month and on April 20 two **Golden-crowned sparrows** heralded what we hope is greater numbers.

On the water, the first **Pigeon guillemots** arrived around the beginning of the month, as did **Mew gulls**. **Bonaparte's gulls** are also back. A flock of about 100 **Western grebes** plied the water in front of town for a few days in early April. Twenty-two **Trumpeter swans** spent about a week early in the month feeding at Pat's Lake along with several **Ring-necked ducks** and **Bufflehead**. Two **Snow geese** entertained Wrangell as they fed on new grass on the Post Office lawn for two days. Flocks of Snow geese overhead were spotted in late March and are still passing on their way to the Stikine River delta where several thousand were observed on April 19 along with a number of **Dunlin**. Melissa Cady reported a lone **Lesser Canada goose** browsing in her yard for one day. **Lesser scaup** were reported feeding with a large mixed flock of **Surf scoters** in Zimovia Strait and 100 **Black turnstones** were seen at Shoemaker Beach.

Northern harriers and **American kestrels** were reported by several observers, who noted that they appeared to be targeting American robins. Jim McComas says **Bald eagles** continue to attack the duck decoys on his pond. **Sandhill cranes** began passing overhead on April 17, an average date for these birds here.

Wrangell's Migratory Bird and Garnet Festival begins on April 23 and continues through April 27.

On an international note, I was visiting with Jim Bourquin of Iskut, in British Columbia's interior and he remarked, "You're liable to see anything these days." He had seen a Brown pelican there a few years ago. My story of a possible sighting of one in Wrangell last fall paled in comparison.

HAINES REPORT – SPRING ARRIVALS by Georgia Giacobbe

Yes, most of the snow is gone around town, and yes the skunk cabbage is starting to grow. However, many of us like the arrival of the spring birds to let us know it is really here. At the end of last month while hiking on Mt. Rapinski, Greg Higgins spotted a **Brown Creeper**. Prior to that on the Chilkoot River, he saw a male and 3 female **Hooded Mergansers**. For some in town, Earth Day was the official arrivals of the **Rufous Hummingbirds** and everyone is scrambling to put their feeders out. It appears that the **Mountain Bluebirds** that first made an appearance 3 to 4 years ago are again back in the Chilkat Valley. **Pileated Woodpeckers** are back and **Varied Thrushes**. **Robins** definitely are around and in breeding plumage and **Goldeneyes** are in breeding plumage in Portage Cove.

Golden-crowned Kinglets have been scratching around in the leaves and shrubs behind my house, and the **Spruce Grouse** drumming their tune. This past week more birds have returned to the Chilkoot River including **Shovelers**, **Green-winged Teals**, a **Long-billed Dowager**, **Widgeons**, **Mallards**, **Bonaparte Gulls**, **Mew Gulls** and of course the **Common Scoters**.

Pam Randles has once again organized the Haines Birdathon which began April 26 and will run for a week. The idea is to count the maximum number of species in a 24-hour period. She says in her family it was a wonderful excuse for a picnic.

APRIL BIRDS IN KETCHIKAN-by Teri Goucher

Most residents in Southeast Alaska have finally felt the warmth of Spring and are appreciating the noticeably longer days this month! Alders are beginning to leaf out, salmonberries are beginning to bud, and lots of Spring bulbs are flowering in gardens around town!

Unfortunately birds often just fly past us when the weather is ideal for humans. Actually, inclement weather is better for birding because the migrants are forced down to wait out the storms which is a lucky thing for enthusiastic birders!

A true sign of spring is the arrival of the first **Rufous Hummingbird** which occurred here the first few days of April. There were several **Trumpeter Swans** at Ward Lake for a while and the earliest record of a **Violet-green Swallow** was recorded there on April 5th. Several **Band-tailed Pigeons** returned to re-establish their small breeding colonies on both ends of our island mid-month.

Along the waterfront in town, about 90 **California Gulls** were seen along with several **Black-legged Kittiwakes** on the 13th.

Quite a few **Wilson's Snipe** and some **Black-bellied Plovers** have been spotted.

Lots of waterfowl have been moving through, including dozens of flocks of **Canada Geese**, **Greater White-fronted Geese** and **Snow Geese**. Lots of **Mallards** and **Pintail** along with **American Wigeon** and even a couple **Eurasian Wigeon** have been found. It was an unusual sight to see 19 **Brant Geese** along the rocky shore near Saxman on April 18th!

There are still a lot of **American Robins** around and seemingly a higher number of **Varied Thrushes** are in our area. Only a couple of **Hermit Thrushes** have been spotted so far this season. Dozens of **Fox Sparrows** are still scratching away in area yards along with lots of **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, **Song Sparrows**, a few **White-crowned Sparrows** and **Lincoln's Sparrows** and a rather late **American Tree Sparrow**.

A variety of raptors have been spotted here, perhaps taking advantage of the uplifting fair weather thermal air currents which aids their migration north. These include: **Northern Harrier**, **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and **Merlins**. Eagles too can be seen spiraling up in these thermals until they become tiny specks high in the sky!

Warblers are showing up the last week or so; mostly **Orange-crowned Warblers** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, but not a single **Townsend's Warbler** yet as of this writing!

Birding is exciting this time of year especially, and I heard a story of a hummingbird aggressively buzzing at the head of a sapsucker just the other day!!

Spring migration is in full swing now for the next month or so at least so take advantage of any time you can get out there birding this special time of year!

I hope everyone has a fantastic summer enjoying the beautiful natural splendor of our amazing corner of the world!

Gustavus Sightings March 27- April 29, 2008

The first **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was heard on 3/29 and the first report of **Sandhill Cranes** flying over was on 4/15. Small flocks of **Brant** started being seen along the beaches in mid April. Shorebirds started trickling in during the second half of April, but had yet to be seen in large numbers by 4/29. Sparrows, thrushes, and hummingbirds were beginning to show up in mid April, and there was an obvious spike in their numbers on 4/24 along with a spike in Ruby-crowned Kinglets and the arrival of the first **Yellow-rumped Warblers**.

Some other first sightings were **Tree Swallow**, **Savannah Sparrow**, and **Arctic Tern** on 4/26, **Townsend's Warbler** on 4/27, and **Lincoln's Sparrow** on 4/28. A **Gyr Falcon** was seen in town on 4/17. A **Horned Lark** was along the beach on 4/19. Two **Eurasian Wigeons** were along rivers in town on 4/26.

The Gustavus **Brambling** was last seen on 4/3 having frequented the same feeder for over three months. During the last week of its presence it was heard singing. Its song was similar to that of a Varied Thrush, but was hoarser.

The **Northern Saw-whet Owls** nesting in a nest box in town now have five nestlings. Each egg hatched almost exactly one month after being laid. The first egg hatched on approximately 4/14 and the fifth egg on approximately 4/23. A sixth egg did not hatch. The adult female owl continues to spend all hours in the box on the young, leaving for only a few minutes each night shortly after nightfall. The adult male owl continues to deliver rodents to the box. There are currently over a dozen rodents, mostly voles, piled inside the box against the walls. Some are beginning to rot and can be smelled when near the box. The young are growing increasingly active. The oldest nestlings are now flapping their tiny wings and preening their own feathers. Although the adult female owl is still sitting on them, they keep her in almost constant motion with their movements.

Thanks to Bruce Paige, Hank Lentfer, Julie Vathke, and Phoebe Vanselow for sharing sightings. By Nat Drumheller. natdrumheller@hotmail.com

Volunteers Across Nation to Track Climate Clues in Spring Flowers

A nationwide initiative starting this week will enable volunteers to track climate change by observing the timing of flowers and foliage. Project BudBurst, operated by the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) and a team of partners, allows students, gardeners and other citizen scientists in every state to enter their observations into an online database at www.budburst.org that will give researchers a detailed picture of our warming climate.

University of Montana researchers Carol Brewer and Paul Alaback (former Juneau resident and Audubon Member) are collaborators on Project BudBurst with the Chicago Botanic Garden and UCAR, which was funded with a grant from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The project is also supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and Windows to the Universe, a UCAR-based Web site that will host the project online as part of its citizen science efforts.

"Project Budburst provides an exciting opportunity for the public, particularly children, to contribute to scientific research on the effects of global climate change on plants," adds Kayri Havens, a scientist at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Each participant in Project BudBurst selects one or more plants to observe. The project Web site suggests more than 60 widely distributed trees and flowers, with information on each. Users can add their own choices.

Participants begin checking their plants at least a week prior to the average date of budburst--the point when the buds have opened and leaves are visible. After budburst, participants continue to observe the tree or flower for later events, such as the first leaf, first flower and, eventually, seed dispersal.

Brewer explains, "as we learn about all the different neighborhoods around the country, we start to get a picture of how environmental changes affect the species that live with us on this planet." When participants submit their records online, they can view maps of these phenological events across the United States.

Many species are being affected by climate change throughout the world. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that 20 to 30 percent of all plant and animal species that researchers study will likely be at increased risk of extinction should global temperatures rise by 2.7 to 4.5 degrees Fahrenheit this century.

Media Contacts

Paul Alaback, UM (406) 521-7953 palaback@forestry.umt.edu

Carol Brewer, UM (406) 243-2632 carol.brewer@umontana.edu

David Hosansky, UCAR/NCAR (303) 497-8611 hosansky@ucar.edu

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 _____ Please bill me
A51 7XCH

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 _____.**

