

# 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 Meeting – November 13, 2008 7:00 PM, UAS Egan Room 221/222**

### **TEN MINUTE INTRODUCTION BY TALDI WALTER**

**Alaska eBird: Birding for Conservation** – Audubon is drawing on citizen science to help document the importance of the Tongass for birds and their habitats. Taldi Walter, Audubon's Communications & Education Specialist, will provide an update on how to use Alaska eBird, an on-line database to maintain your bird observations and life list. Each observation submitted to Alaska eBird contributes to an international network, which is one of the largest and fastest growing biodiversity data resources in existence. Learning how to use eBird is a great way to contribute to conservation in Alaska.

Taldi Walter joined the Audubon Alaska staff in June as the Communications & Education Specialist. Taldi was born in Alaska and raised in the Flathead Valley of Northwest Montana. Taldi joins us from the National Audubon Society's Public Policy Office in Washington, D.C., where she worked as the Alaska Outreach Coordinator. In this capacity, she delivered 110 lectures in 39 states throughout the U.S., highlighting priority Alaska lands issues. Taldi received her Master's in Biology from the University of Central Arkansas. Her thesis work took her to the Atlantic rainforest of Brazil, where she studied rainforest and invasive species ecology.

### **ECUADOR, GALAPAGOS AND NATIONAL PARKS OF COSTA RICA**

"Join Linda Shaw for highlights from her tours of Latin American eco-tourism gems from the Amazon and cloud forests of Ecuador to the legendary Galapagos and the national parks of Costa Rica. Meet fascinating creatures like the only sea-swimming lizard in the world and a giant antpitta named Maria to inspire your next eco-tourism adventure!"



*Masked Booby in the Galapagos*



*Maria the Antpitta of the Ecuador cloud forest*

## **DECEMBER 11, JUNEAU AUDUBON PUBLIC MEETING**

Garrett Savory will speak on "Avian Influenza sampling in Greenland"  
Garret works for USDA.

## **JUNEAU PUBLIC MARKET NOVEMBER 28 - 30, 2008.**

Juneau Audubon Society's annual fund raiser is our booth at the Juneau Public Market. Our biggest seller every year is our wonderful jellies and jams, organized by Mary Lou King. She not only picks many of the berries, but also with several volunteers, makes 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 to have two people for two hour shifts. Since the booth is open 12:00 - 8:00 p.m. on Friday and 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, we need 24 volunteers to help us sell our wares during the weekend. If you are available to help, please call Patty at 586-1334 or send a message to [secretary@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:secretary@juneau-audubon-society.org).

## **Thanksgiving Day Bird Counts-2008**

The annual Thanksgiving Bird Count is rapidly approaching and will take place November 27th. 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](http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org) or <http://www.utahbirds.org/cbc/ThanksgBCForm.htm>

## **Matt Kirchhoff Takes New Job with Audubon State Office**

Matt Kirchhoff, a former Juneau Chapter board member, has accepted a new position as the Director of Bird Conservation with the state Audubon office in Anchorage. He and his wife, Patty, packed up their car and drove north at the end of September, leaving just in time to miss the October rains!

Matt's primary job duties will include building and monitoring the state's growing list of Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Currently, Alaska has 147 IBAs, and nearly half of those have been rated as "globally significant" (including Juneau's Mendenhall Wetlands). One of Matt's first priorities will be to nominate the Icy-Strait-Glacier Bay area as an IBA. This area, which is perhaps best known for its abundance of humpbacked whales, is also important to tens of thousands of Marbled and Kittlitz's Murrelets in the summertime, and may support the highest density of murrelets anywhere throughout their range.

In addition to IBAs, Matt will be in charge up updating and publishing the Alaska Watchlist. This effort uses objective criteria on population size, trend, and threats to identify declining and vulnerable bird populations in the state. The last list was published in 2005, and Matt hopes to have the next list drafted in early 2009. He will be sending it around to bird experts around the state for review prior to publication.

Matt will continue to be involved in research as well. He plans to continue his studies on Marbled and Kittlitz's Murrelets in Glacier Bay, and is hoping to be peripherally involved in research that other agency and University biologists are involved.

Being able to get out to some of the far corners of the state was a primary motivation for Matt's move. "I loved living and working in Southeast Alaska all these years, but the chance to see places like the Aleutians, the Coleville River, and Teshekpuk Lake is pretty appealing too".

Matt will be working from the new state office location in Anchorage at 441 West 5<sup>th</sup>, Avenue, Suite 300. Matt will continue to stay in touch with the Juneau Chapter and expects to be making work-related visits to Juneau. People wanting to contact Matt can reach him at 907-276-7034, or by email at [mkirchhoff@audubon.org](mailto:mkirchhoff@audubon.org).

### **Juneau Bird Observations for October 2008 by Mark Schwan**

Migration seemed slow early in the month but things picked up considerably at mid-month. Birders were treated with excellent diversity of waterfowl including uncommon and rare species, as well as a strong showing of swans, most of which appeared to be Tundra Swans. Through most of the month, there was a nice variety, albeit small numbers, of lingering shorebirds, and during the third week, a wave of late warblers was noteworthy. Here are some highlights.

A single **Blue-winged Teal** at the Mendenhall Wetlands on October 18 was a very late sighting (BA). There were from one to several **Redheads** seen through most of the month at the Wetlands, with four present on October 20 (many obs). Two **Ruddy Ducks** were in with the more common ducks on one of the finger basins of the floatplane pond on October 20 (GV,DM,PS,RG).

There were two **Yellow-billed Loons** at Point Bridget on October 18 and one near Outer Point on October 19 (PS). A **Double-crested Cormorant**: was at Outer Point on October 19 and then re-sighted on October 21 (PS).

The biggest surprise of last month, Juneau's first documented **Turkey Vulture**, was relocated along the lower Mendenhall River on October 3 (BW). There were two **Peregrine Falcon** reports, one at the Wetlands on October 18 (BA), and another also at the Wetlands on October 20 (GV); possibly the same bird was lingering in the area.

The more interesting shorebirds observations included a mix of rare species and more common species making late appearances. A single **Pacific Golden-Plover**, a very rare species, was at the Wetlands on October 20 (RG). A late (for Juneau but not Gustavus)

**Sanderling** was at Eagle Beach on October 6 and still present on October 12 (MS). Two **Western Sandpipers** were observed on October 6, and a single bird was observed on October 12 at Eagle Beach, late dates for this species (MS). Two **Baird's Sandpipers** at Eagle Beach on October 3 also was a bit unusual (MS). Always a treat for birders, but most often found a month earlier, the only local fall report of **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** came when a single bird was found at the Wetlands on October 20 (RG). Finally, although a common migrant in spring and fall, **Short-billed Dowitchers** are present in Juneau after the fall equinox in very small numbers, so one at Eagle Beach on October 6 and 12 was worth noting (MS).

**Orange-crowned Warblers**, are considered rare after late September, but are usually locatable with effort, sometimes well into November or later depending on the weather. Reports included two at Brotherhood Park on October 3, one at Eagle Beach on October 17 (MS), and two to four at the Wetlands on October 20 (GB, GV, RG). **Yellow Warbler** is rarely seen in October in Juneau, so it was quite the surprise when one was found at the Wetlands on October 20 (GV) and two were found at the Wetlands the next day, October 21 (MS). Also rare in October, four to eight **Wilson's Warblers** were observed at the Wetlands on October 20 (GB, GV, RG).



Rare sparrows seen during October included two **Harris's Sparrows** seen together along the bank of the lower Mendenhall River on October 7 (MS), a **White-throated Sparrow** at a feeder on Douglas Island on October 23 and 25 - 27 (PS), and a **Swamp Sparrow** observed at the Wetlands on October 28 (PS).

Contributors: Bev Agler (BA), Gwen Baluss (GB), Rich Gordon (RG), Deanna MacPhail (DM), Mark Schwan (MS), Paul Suchanek (PS), Gus van Vliet (GV), and Brenda Wright (BW). Thanks to all who contributed.

## **WRANGELL SIGHTINGS** By Bonnie Demerjian

**Pine Siskins, Dark-eyed Juncos and Steller's Jays** are mobbing the feeders but several watchers have reported **Black-billed Magpies** as well these past few weeks. Several **White-crowned Sparrows** have also been around. Few winter ducks are have shown up in front of town yet excepting **Harlequins, Mallards** and a single **Ring-necked Duck** and pair of **Blue-winged Teal** at the golf course pond.

A small flock of **Band-tailed Pigeons** was reported as were two **Mourning Doves**, one of which was found dead by an elementary student.

Another observer recently noticed a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** tapping holes in a tree. Close behind it were two opportunistic **Red-breasted Nuthatches** exploring the same holes.

Sixteen **Trumpeters Swans**, annual fall and spring visitors were spotted this week on Pat's Lake. **Western Grebes**, **Common** and **Pacific Loons** and **Common Mergansers** are back as well.

Mice and voles are the big news on the Stikine Delta. Bumper crops are drawing hawks and owls to the feast. Besides numbers of **Northern Harriers**, observers have spotted **Red-tailed Hawks**, **Northern Pygmy Owls** and **Great Horned Owls**. Several cabin owners say Great-horned conversations are keeping them up at night. Duck hunters report mixed flocks of as many as fifty owls and hawks swarming above the flats when a rising tide brings voles swimming to higher ground.

### **Stikine River Delta named Important Bird Area**

The Stikine River Delta in August joined the ranks of approximately 130 other Important Bird Areas in Alaska. The Audubon's Important Bird Area (IBA) program conveys recognition without regulation to areas important for maintaining bird populations and focuses efforts to conserve these sites. It seeks to protect sites that attract birds that may be vulnerable due to conservation concerns, limited range or congregatory behavior.

The Stikine River Delta is of international importance because its silt-laden waters cover one of the largest fresh and tidally submerged mudflats (over 11,000 hectares) between British Columbia and the Copper River Delta. The Delta was granted IBA Global status in particular because of its intense concentrations of Western Sandpipers and Snow Geese. From one to three million **Western Sandpipers** use the river flats as a staging area. The population of **Lesser Snow Geese** using the Stikine delta breed on Russia's Wrangel Island. Over 10,000 have been recorded on the delta in one day. This population is managed separately from other Lesser Snow Goose populations and faces greater pressures on its breeding grounds from weather and predation.

A further designation of the delta as part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), which is supported by the Wrangell and Petersburg city councils, is pending. Yakutat's Black Sand Spit was also named an IBA in August, in part because its tern colony may be the largest breeding colony of **Aleutian Terns** in the world.

### **Haines Report** By Georgia Giacobbe

As fall has come to a crashing close into winter in Haines, the birds have been accommodating their schedules as usual. As of September 19, migrant birds headed south and the winter birds appeared. Those headed south included **Common Loons**, **Western Grebes**, **Red-necked Grebes**, and **Harlequin Ducks**. Reappearing were **Nuthatches**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, and definitely **Magpies**. **Steller Jays** started heading for feeders. At about the first frost, Pam Randles spotted a Juvenile **Goshawk** still hanging around. A day later a **Downy Woodpecker** was spied near Haines School.

After our first snow (October 24), we were visited by about a dozen Magpies all fighting at our feeding station. Pam spotted a swan swimming in Portage Cove, Several rafts of **Barrow's Goldeneyes** from Portage Cove to Lutak, ranging in size from 30 – 200 birds. **Glaucous-winged Gulls**, **Northwest Crows**, **Common Ravens** and **Bald**

**Eagles** were hanging around. Now, the eagles naturally are moving over to the Chikot River for the late salmon run. **Bonaparte's g\Gulls** and **Mallards** were spotted at Chilkoot Estuary. Chickadees, Juncos, Jays and Nuthatch have been coming to the feeders.

And speaking of Bald Eagles gathering, a reminder that the **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Bald Eagle Festival is scheduled for November 5-9, 2008**. Robert O'Toole a photographer/photoshop instructor from Clearwater, Florida, and John C. Pitcher, artist/naturalist from Dorset, Vermont are this year's presenters. For more info go to [www.baldeaglefestival.org](http://www.baldeaglefestival.org)

### **Gustavus Sightings 9/28 to 10/29/2008**

One **Osprey** was seen on 9/30 and two were over town on 10/30. **Peregrine Falcons** continued to be seen regularly through the period with four on 10/13. **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were along beaches west of town through the period with a high count of fifteen on 10/18. Single **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were in beach grasses on three dates in October and there were two on 10/27. A few **Western Sandpipers** lingered into October with two on 10/13 being the last.

Returning **Dunlin** and **Rock Sandpipers** were first seen in small numbers on 10/4 along with a couple hundred **Sanderlings**. On 10/25, there were about 900 Dunlin and 100 Rock Sandpipers. By 10/27, Dunlin numbers were closer to 3,000 with several hundred Rock Sandpipers. A Dunlin on 10/25 had leg bands indicating it had been banded on the



*Sharp-tailed Sandpiper*

Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta continuing a string of several years that birds banded there have been sighted in Gustavus. The **Mourning Dove** mentioned in the last report was at the same spot on 10/4. **Short-eared Owls, Great Horned Owls, and Northern Pygmy Owls** were all heard and/or seen in October. A **Barred Owl** was heard in town on 10/7. It was a good season for **Red-throated Pipits**. In addition to the Red-throated Pipits mentioned in the last report, single birds were on a beach near town on 9/30 and 10/20 and two were along the shore south of Bartlett Cove on 10/11. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** are still around in good numbers with as many as five at one time on my feeder. A late **Wilson's Warbler** was in town on 10/27. Several times this month, **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** were observed on my chimney cap perched in the wood smoke and taking soot in their bills and rubbing it on their feathers. This "smoke bathing" has been observed in past years, as well. All sightings by Nat Drumheller [natdrumheller@hotmail.com](mailto:natdrumheller@hotmail.com)

### **BOOK REVIEW**

#### **Attending Alaska's Birds by Jim King**

Hot off the presses and available at Hearthside Books and Amazon.com. Find out more about the life and history of Alaska's birds in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as we are flown around Alaska by scientist and pilot Jim King.

## **Project FeederWatch Benefits Birds and People**

*Connection with nature promotes wellness*

The 2008-09 season of **Project FeederWatch** gets underway **November 8** and runs through April 3. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants submitted more than 115,000 checklists during the 2007-08 FeederWatch season, documenting unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges—a treasure-trove of information that scientists use to monitor the health of the birds and of the environment.

Project FeederWatch welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels, from scout troops and retirees to classrooms and nature center visitors. To learn more and to sign up, visit [www.feederwatch.org](http://www.feederwatch.org) or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Lab members) participants receive the *FeederWatcher's Handbook*, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report, *Winter Bird Highlights*.

**Note:** Photos are available at [www.feederwatch.org](http://www.feederwatch.org). To find local participants for stories, contact David Bonter at (607) 254-2457 or email [dnb23@cornell.edu](mailto:dnb23@cornell.edu). Visit the “Explore Data” section of the web site to find the top 25 birds reported in your region, rare bird sightings, and bird summaries by state or province.

### **500 FOOT MONTANA CREEK GREENBELT PUT BACK IN JUNEAU COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Almost two years ago Trout Unlimited began working toward securing a 500' buffer along either side of Montana Creek on all City and Borough of Juneau lands. They put together a report and began interacting with the city to hopefully get this corridor established in the updated comprehensive plan. TU asked Audubon for a letter of support and we did that. Several weeks ago Brad Elfers contacted me and said they were running into some last minute opposition and the assembly had taken the language out of the plan, and/or significantly reduced the corridor width. **From Brad Elfers:** "Our 500 foot recreation and conservation corridor was put back into the comp plan (by a vote of 7-2) and the comp plan was approved unanimously by the assembly. This applies to all CBJ lands along Montana Creek. This is one of the largest protection corridors along an urban Alaskan stream that I know of. Your personal help along with that of Audubon was invaluable. It is very satisfying that after a two year public process, the value that the community of Juneau places on Montana Creek has been recognized."

### **Juneau Audubon Society Officers, Committee Chairs, Events Coordinators**

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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, PO Box 422246, Palm Coast, FL 32142-6714

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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\_\_\_\_ 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, money and view photos in color. To choose this option, write your email address here \_\_\_\_\_.**

