

# 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

December 2008

## **Juneau Audubon Public Meeting – December 11, 2008 7:00 PM, UAS Egan Room 221/222**

### **Capturing Experience for Avian Influenza Sampling in Greenland**

Garrett Savory this past July went to Thule Air Base in northwestern Greenland for USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services. Our purpose was to determine if geese in the area had avian influenza. I will discuss how we captured the geese and my experience in



Greenland.

Also on the evening program will be a short presentation on the **Christmas Bird Count by Patty Rose and Paul Suchanek**. They will talk about techniques for counting and estimating birds and discuss identification of some of our local birds, especially in conditions that make getting good views of birds difficult. It should be fun and a nice orientation for people planning to go on the bird count.

## **TENS OF THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEERS TO JOIN AUDUBON'S CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

### Holiday Tradition Yields Data Vital for Conservation

Bird watchers from Barrow, Alaska to Belize City, Belize will spend part of their holiday season far from shopping malls, looking for birds in the great outdoors. The longest running Citizen Science event in the world, Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place between December 14, 2008 and January 5, 2009. Information gathered will help scientists learn more about how birds are faring throughout North America, adding to over a century of data collected by previous generations of volunteers.

The Christmas Bird Count began over a century ago when the founder of *Audubon* magazine, Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. In 1900, Chapman led a small group on an alternative to the "side hunt," when teams competed to see who could shoot the most game. Instead, Chapman proposed they identify, count, and record all the birds they saw, founding what is now considered to be the world's most significant citizen-based conservation effort. During last year's count, nearly 70 million birds were counted in all 50 states, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and Pacific Islands.

"Everyone who takes part in the Christmas Birds Count plays a critical role in helping us focus attention and conservation where it is most needed," said Dr. Tom Bancroft, Chief Scientist for Audubon. "Their observations are the foundation for Audubon's State of the Birds Reports, like our Common Birds in Decline analysis, which attracted worldwide attention and concern when it revealed precipitous declines among many of our nation's most common and familiar birds."

Given habitat and wild areas disappearing at an alarming rate, and global warming affecting some ranges, scientists will rely on CBC data to identify birds in most urgent need of conservation action. The holiday bird count is also instrumental in developing Audubon's WatchList, which most recently identified species in the continental U.S. and 38 in Hawaii in dire need of conservation help. The counts also reveal good news, the return of the American bald eagle, for example.

"The Christmas Bird Count is all about the power of individual action – that's why our theme is 'I Count,'" says Geoff LeBaron, Audubon's Christmas Bird Count Director. "What we do truly counts when it comes to conservation. These birds are sending us a clear message that their fate is determined by human activity more than anything else. As we've seen with the bald eagle, when we help them through conservation, their chances improve. But when we damage their habitat, convert wetlands and forests, then they are more likely to become rare or extinct."

To explore the historical information and learn more about the locations of upcoming Christmas Bird Counts, visit the Society's website at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html). Anyone with an interest in birds and birding is encouraged to participate. New participants should contact compilers and sign up well in advance of count day. Below is a listing of the known counts, with contacts, taking place in Southeast Alaska this year.

### Known Christmas Bird Counts planned in Southeast Alaska

Chilkat	December 14	Dan Egolf* Tim Shields	766-2876 766-2354
Haines	December 14	Dan Egolf Tim Shields	766-2876 766-2354
Juneau	December 20	Mark Schwan Gus van Vliet	789-9841
Ketchikan	December 20	Andrew Piston	247-6553
Mitkof Island	December 20	Bill Pawuk	772-3985
Sitka	January 4	Victoria Vosburg	747-7821
Skagway	December 14	Elaine Furbish Dawn Adams	983-2049 983-3302
Tenakee Springs	Date not set yet**	Beret Barnes	736-2226
Wrangell	December 14	Bonnie Demerjian	874-3665

\*Forms and information available at the Back Country Ski Shop

\*\* Date dependent upon optimum tide schedule

### The 2008 Juneau Christmas Bird Count

The Juneau Christmas Bird Count will be held this year on **Saturday, December 20**, the first Saturday during the designated count period, of December 14 through January 5<sup>th</sup>. As usual, volunteers should meet at either of the **two McDonald's Restaurants no later than 8 a.m.** on count day, with appropriate attire and binoculars. People wanting to count in the downtown, Douglas, and north Douglas Island areas should meet at the downtown restaurant; birders wishing to work the Lemon Creek, airport, Mendenhall Valley and Auke Bay areas should meet at the valley restaurant. As always, there will be a potluck after the count to share in the events of the day and to conduct the tally of birds and species seen. Let's have a great turnout and a terrific count! For more information on this year's Count, you can call Mark Schwan, at 789-9841.

### **Alaska Audubon Creates Video on Teshekpuk Lake**

You've read the news articles and action alerts. Northern Alaska National Petroleum Reserve: You've sent letters and emails to BLM and Congress. Now see this awesome, remote wetland for yourself: check out the online video at [http://www.audubonalaska.org/IssuesAction\\_Teshekpukvideo.html](http://www.audubonalaska.org/IssuesAction_Teshekpukvideo.html)

### **Our Adopted MoSI station**

**Last winter Juneau Audubon decided to sponsor a MoSI Station.** MoSI (Monitoreo de Sobrevivencia Invernal - Monitoring Overwintering Survival) bird banding stations operates through a winter season. With our contribution of \$300, we supported a bird banding station in western Mexico near Culiacan called El Palmito. It is near the town of Loberas, Sinaloa in tropical and subtropical coniferous forest. We wanted to sponsor a station that would increase the information about the species that migrate to the Juneau area. When you sponsor a station you receive information including a list of species and the numbers of individual birds captured at the station. We first heard about this program in the Cornell University publication "Living Bird". You can read the article at [http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Publications/LivingBird/Winter2007/monitoring\\_survival.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Publications/LivingBird/Winter2007/monitoring_survival.html).

This is the fifth year of this program. It provides important insights into habitat needs of migratory birds during winter. The report we received included total number of species and birds banded for the years since 2003. For more information on this program check out their webpage: <http://birdpop.org/membership.htm>.

### **Calling All Alaska Bird Watchers**

*More eyes needed to tally state birds*

*Ithaca, NY*-Bird watchers in Alaska are invited to **sign up now** for the 2008-09 season of **Project FeederWatch**. More participants are needed from the state to track the numbers and kinds of birds at feeders each week and then send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The information provided becomes part of the world's **largest database on feeder-bird populations**.

Project FeederWatch welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels. To learn more and to sign up, visit [www.feederwatch.org](http://www.feederwatch.org) or call (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Lab members) participants receive the *FeederWatcher's Handbook*, a bird-identification poster, a calendar, instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report.

***Bird Highlights, Reporting Results.***  
**November Bird Observations in Juneau**

By Mark Schwan

It was an excellent month to watch Short-eared Owls at the Wetlands, as many were seen early on, and one or two birds could sometimes be seen up to the end of the month. Unfortunately, one birder witnessed the apparent shooting of a Short-eared Owl on November 25 by airport personnel adjacent to the runway. We subsequently found out that the permit issued to the airport now gives them the authority to kill Short-eared Owls as well as Northern Harriers, and that the number of owls taken this year, and likely just this fall, is at least **fifteen**. Perhaps we will learn more as to why this has become a necessary part of the airport's bird deterrent program. On a more positive note, here are the highlights for the month.



*Northern Hawk Owl By Patty Rose*

Although not rare in Juneau, two **Northern Goshawks**, one immature and one adult, frequenting the Wetlands from late the previous month through at least November 10, was a treat for many local birders (RG, many obs.). Very rare in Juneau, a **Northern Hawk Owl**, was found and photographed by Patty Rose on November 1 near the airport dike trail parking lot. The bird was seen later in the day by several other birders (GV,MM, RG,BA). A

**Northern Flicker** (yellow-shafted form) was seen on the Wetlands on November 13 (MA,GB,AS). Several birders and non-birders took notice of an immature **Townsend's Solitaire** along the Wetlands trail on November 9 and 10 (RG). An apparent **Eastern Yellow Wagtail** was seen on November 11 flying over the wetlands dike trail (RG,PR,MS). The identification was pieced together by the three birders collectively gathering enough characters to be comfortable with the identification. Rich Gordon was the only individual to have a good enough look at the bird to determine it was an adult, based on a good view of a pale but definite yellowish breast. Other birders have briefly relocated the bird, on November 23 (GV,MM) and November 24 (PS,DM). The flight call was heard on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, which was consistent for the species, but otherwise, confirmation has been difficult.

Very late and lingering single **Wilson's Warblers** were found at Auke Bay on November 15 (GV) and at the Wetlands on November 23 (GV,RG) and November 25 (PS). Most

exceptional was the **Tennessee Warbler** found downtown on November 15 (MA). This represents the latest and first fall record for this species in Juneau. A **Spotted Towhee** briefly visited Brenda Wright's feeder on November 11. This species is very rare in Alaska, and interestingly, the majority of records have come from Juneau. A **White-throated Sparrow** was located at a downtown residence on November 8, 10, and 27 (MA), and another bird that first appeared at a north Douglas Island feeder late last month remained loyal to the site through at least November 26 (PS).

Finally, recognition must be given to Gus van Vliet. Gus spotted an **American Three-toed Woodpecker** at his residence on November 11. This was the 200<sup>th</sup> species Gus has seen either in his yard or from his yard, i.e. his yard list. This is quite exceptional and represents 20 years of bird records from this location. This is without doubt the most extensive yard list for any Alaskan birder. It is quite an accomplishment.

Contributors: Bev Agler, BA; Mark Anderson, MA; Gwen Baluss, GB; Rich Gordon, RG; Molly MacCafferty, MM; Deanna MacPhail, DM; Patty Rose, PR; Mark Schwan, MS; Andy Smoker, AS; Paul Suchanek, PS; Gus van Vliet, GV; Brenda Wright, BW. Thanks to those that contributed.

### **Wrangell Bird Observations** By Bonnie Demerjian

This summer's abundant mountain ash berry crop is continuing to attract and nourish birds in Wrangell. Both **Bohemian** and **Cedar** waxwings were reported feeding on the berries all month. So also were a flock of about 50 **European Starlings**.

A small number of **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows** have turned up at feeders this month, as did an **Orange-crowned Warbler**. A **Wilson's Warbler** was reported early in November.

**Black Turnstones** were the only shorebird seen this month. A flock of around 1000 **Western Grebes** was reported. This group shows up each winter and we hope they turn up on the Christmas Bird Count. More **Bonaparte Gulls** than usual are staying around so far this winter.

A small flock of **Trumpeter Swans** has remained on Pat's Lake though a larger group has apparently moved on.

### **AUTUMN BIRDS IN KETCHIKAN**-by Teri Goucher

Many birds of interest have been seen in our area in spite of the typically stormy weather usual for this season. There were some very windy days but temperatures fell below freezing just a few times and the snow level made it to sea level only a couple times.

The first ever record of a **Cassin's Finch** was made a few hundred feet from my home south of town. Unfortunately I missed this rarity as I was vacationing and working on my

Hawaiian reef fish checklist...Darn! This species looks very similar to the Purple Finch, but the Cassin's Finch has a slightly longer conical bill and the raspberry-red coloring is brightest on the crown. These birds are usually found in the coniferous forest of western North America and breed as far north as the inland areas of southwestern Canada. A **Purple Finch** was also seen this past month in town.

There are still lots of sparrows and some feeders area wide have attracted up to 5 **Golden-crowned Sparrows** , several **White-crowned Sparrows** and a few **White-throated Sparrows** this month.

Quite a few **American Tree Sparrows** are here and many **Fox Sparrows** remain, including a 'red' Fox Sparrow. **Lincoln's Sparrows** and a **Chipping Sparrow** were found in the now bare branches of neighborhood shrubs.

A **Swamp Sparrow** has frequented a brushy area in Saxman where a old house was recently torn down. Sometimes urban renewal can be good as this created prime habitat for this species!

Many late warblers were seen here in November including **Orange-crowned Warblers** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers**. An almost latest record ever for a couple of **Wilson's Warblers** was made on the 16th of November.

A quick glimpse of an **Evening Grosbeak** was enjoyed briefly around mid-month.

A **Slaty-backed Gull** was seen along our waterfront; it's very dark colored back easy to spot amidst the paler gulls.

A **Boreal Owl** enjoyed a bit of fame as a photo of this elusive species was posted on SitNews. This is only the second Ketchikan record but this beautiful owl is surely more common in our forests than sightings indicate!

**This year's Christmas Bird Count for the Ketchikan area will be held December 20th. For more information and to sign up please contact Andy Piston at 225-5195.**

Good luck birding to all as we now settle into our winter months here in Alaska!

### **Skagway Christmas Bird Count**

We are having our Xmas Bird Count on Sunday, **December 14th**. If you know of any Juneau-ites headed up this direction for that weekend that might want to participate, they can contact Elaine (snowshoes@aptalaska.net) or myself (dawna26@hotmail.com). There are a lot of Yuletide events that weekend that should be great fun as well.

## CORPS OF ENGINEERS PERMIT APPLICATIONS

To see the full permit go to: <http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/PNNew.htm> and then to Public Notices on the left

### Petersburg

Activity: The placement of clean fill material in wetlands for the development of 24 housing driveways and house pads, for use as single-family homes, within the Tlingit/Haida Subdivision, Petersburg, Alaska.

Application Number: POA-2006-1546

### Sitka

APPLICANT: Halibut Point Marina Services; POA-2005-1813

PROPOSED WORK: Reconstruct the boat lift area, reference sheet 6 of 9, "Travelift Dock Demo and Replacement Plans.

PROJECT MANAGER: John Klutz

### Juneau

Applicant: Alaska Marine Lines

Activity: Applicant's stated purpose is "To change the existing configuration of a marine terminal cargo yard at the Juneau Rock Dump, to increase the volume, speed and efficiency of cargo handling and transfer."

Application No: POA-2006-1979-M2

PROPOSED WORK: Applicant proposes to discharge approximately 50,000 cubic yards of fill material into approximately 2.75 acres of waters and navigable waters of the U.S. The fill material, comprising sand, gravel and shot rock) would consist of approximately 10,000 cubic yards of material excavated on site (see Additional Information, below), plus approximately 40,000 cubic yards brought in from upland sources. All work would be performed in accordance with the enclosed plans (6 sheets), dated 10-29-08.

Project Manager: John C. Leeds, III - [john.c.leeds@usace.army.mil](mailto:john.c.leeds@usace.army.mil)

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

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

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#### Field Trips:

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

**New Board Members:** Merrill Jensen and Mark Anderson

**Merrill Jensen** comes to the Juneau Audubon Society's Board with a lifelong passion for watching birds. He led his first birding field trip when he was in first grade. He took his fellow classmates out to the playground to observe the horned larks that frequented the weeds there. Originally from Wyoming, he has birded throughout the western U.S. (including Hawaii), northern Europe and Asia and continues to add to his life list. He is a professional Horticulturist and serves as the Arboretum Manager for the CBJ's Jensen-Olson Arboretum. This is his 4<sup>th</sup> public garden that he has had the privilege to work for. He is looking forward to being actively involved again with Audubon after a ten year absence.

**Mark Anderson** grew up in Juneau and graduated from J-D High School in 1970. I then did a lot of field work for ADF&G and got a B.S. in Fisheries Science from UAS. I also worked for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation in the Administration and Water Quality Sections. I have worked for about 10 years as an Environmental Impact Analyst for the Alaska Dept. of Transportation and recently retired from the State. I am a local birdwatcher and now find that I am also interested in travel to see more exotic birding spots. Other interests of mine include skiing, fishing, family, guitar, and hiking (not necessarily in that order). I am excited to be a new board member of Juneau Audubon.

**"Winter and the Nuthatch"** by Mary Oliver, from Red Bird.

Once or twice and maybe again, who knows, the timid nuthatch will come to me if I stand still, with something good to eat in my hand.

The first time he did it he landed smack on his belly, as though the legs wouldn't cooperate.

The next time he was bolder. Then he became absolutely wild about those walnuts. But there was a morning I came late and, guess what, the nuthatch was flying into a stranger's hand.

To speak plainly, I felt betrayed.

I wanted to say: Mister, that nuthatch and I have a relationship.

It took hours of standing in the snow before he would drop from the tree and trust my fingers.

But I didn't say anything.

Nobody owns the sky or the trees.

Nobody owns the hearts of birds.

Still, being human and partial therefore to my own successes— though not resentful of others fashioning theirs—

I'll come tomorrow, I believe, quite early.

**\*\*\*Please consider getting *The Raven* by e-mail instead of snail mail to save paper, time, money and view photos in color. Send your request by email to : Membership:, [membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:membership@juneau-audubon-society.org)**

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ My check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Please bill me  
**A51 7XCH**

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

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