

# 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 WILL HOLD THE FIRST FALL SEASON GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8**

**Election of Officers:** Juneau Audubon Society will elect officers in conjunction with the public meeting on October 8<sup>th</sup> (time and place to be announced in the October newsletter). Our officers serve a term of one year; so all officers must be elected each year. Nominations from the floor at the annual meeting are accepted for all positions. The election slate for 2009 at this time includes Mark Schwan for president, Jeff Sauer for vice-president, Patty Rose for treasurer, and we are still looking for someone willing to serve as secretary. Please contact any of the officers or board members if you would like to be on the ballot as an officer, especially if you are interested in serving as our secretary. Also, if anyone is willing to volunteer for any of our standing committees, that would be great too. Our standing committees include membership, program, field trip, education, conservation, and newsletter.



Juvenile Winter Wren by Mark Schwan

**Program:** We plan to do our fall, group “slide show” again for our public program next month. This is where we ask folks to bring about 10 images to share with the group. These can center on something special you did during this past summer, or something you did many years ago, or whatever you might think the audience would find interesting or fun. There is no theme, just bring some images to share with the group. We will have a traditional slide projector as well as a computer and LCD projector.

## **JUNEAU AUDUBON’S NEW WEB PAGES**

Juneau Audubon received some funds from the state office, called collaborative funds, to pay for a new web page design. This project is just completing at this time. We hired a local student at UAS, Saffron Hayes, to do this work for the chapter, and we appreciate his efforts and work. You can expect the pages to look different but provide the same information as before. Our webmaster, George Utermohle will be adding some finishing touches and organization to the pages, so be a little patient, as we head into the fall.

## Summer Bird Notes for Juneau June through August, 2009

This summer's birding around Juneau was nothing exceptional but there were enough unusual observations to keep things interesting. However, one event clearly stood out from all the rest. More on that below. In the past, this article has included all observations of birds that have a status on our local checklist of rare, or rarer. Now that some of Juneau's most active birders are routinely posting observations to eBird, along with the established Yahoo Group Eaglechat, it seems unnecessary to recreate herein a comprehensive list of all the less common and rare birds seen locally. Readers are encouraged to review the Eaglechat archives and to explore the informative databases at eBird.org.

Moreover, the Juneau Audubon website includes the regional quarterly summaries of the more notable bird observations from around all of Southeast Alaska. These compilations, prepared by Steve Heintz and Andy Piston, are outstanding, and should be considered standard reading for anyone in Southeast Alaska with an interest in the status and distribution of birds in our region. Given this preamble, here are a few selected highlights from Juneau this summer.

Without question, the story of the summer around Southeast Alaska was the invasion of **Eurasian Collared-Doves**. This species, native to the Old World and introduced to the Bahamas, became established in Florida in the 1980s and has been rapidly expanding across the continent ever since. The species had already arrived to our region before this year, but the birds made their first showing in Juneau this year, and they were found in many communities across Southeast. They seemed to be falling out of the air everywhere.

Other local birding reports in this newsletter will report on the dove elsewhere in the region. Here in Juneau, it all started when one bird was seen at the Fairweather horse stables on the morning of June 5, and the bird was nicely photographed (PR). Later in that day, two birds were seen at the same location (SZ, HZ, GV). On June 8<sup>th</sup>, a single collared-dove was found and photographed at Sandy Beach (GV, RM, PS, MS). After that, there was a flurry of reports of one or two birds being seen near the airport, and on June 20<sup>th</sup> birders found out that two birds were attempting to nest in a tree along Muir Ave (JJ). This nesting attempt appears to have failed but there were later reports of collared-doves attempting to nest adjacent to Radcliffe Road and road construction workers reported up to three birds present there. Periodic sighting occurred through the end of August. It will be fascinating to see how this story progresses over the next few years.

Vagrant hawk reports seem far and few between in our area, so a light-phased **Swainson's Hawk** up along Gold Ridge was a nice surprise. This bird, initially found on June 26 (DB, MS) was subsequently seen over the next week or so by other birders (GV, BA). Serendipity was at hand when an **Upland Sandpiper** flew up from the median strip on Egan drive near Twin lakes on August 24 (GV). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was on the wetlands at "Phalarope Slough" on July 19<sup>th</sup> (GV), and was subsequently viewed and photographed by many local birders. On the flip side to reporting just the rarest of the rare, here is a reminder of just how great the Juneau area is for birds, and birders. On August 28, Paul Suchanek and Nick Hajdukovich **tallied 16 species of shorebirds at Eagle Beach**. This may be a record, and it is a reminder of how lucky we are to have the extensive habitats that attract these birds. Gulls of interest were far and few between, but our locally famous **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was seen at various times throughout the summer by several observers, and we had one report of a single **Ring-billed Gull** from north Douglas on August 21

(SZ). Far and away, the best gull report came from Gus van Vliet, when he found an adult **Laughing Gull** at Auke Bay on May 30 (not June but close enough) . This is the first record of this species in Juneau, and in fact, the species is still only on the unsubstantiated list of birds for Alaska, meaning it hasn't been documented either by photograph or specimen.

There were several situations this summer where birders located possible vagrant Empidonax flycatchers, but most accounts left the observers guessing and scratching their heads. Rich Gordon was comfortable reporting a **Willow Flycatcher** from along the airport dike path on August 11. Earlier, on June 22, Paul Suchanek saw and heard a **Least Flycatcher** well up Perseverance Trail. It was an excellent year for **Cassin's Vireo** in Juneau. The first bird was reported through Eaglechat, with a bird found near the end of River Road in the Mendenhall Valley on May 16 (DR, DM). This bird remained extremely loyal to this area and was easily locatable due to constant singing to almost the end of June. Two other birds were found on May 30, one along Perseverance Trail just above the parking area (BP, MS, Saturday bird walk) and one at the beginning of the airport dike trail (PS). Yet another bird was found on June 30 at Moose Lake (MS, SZ).

It is rare that the bird which goes unidentified is of much interest to anyone, but in one instance, here in Juneau, a bird not readily identifiable has caused more interest than most would have imagined. An **unusually plumaged, swallow-like bird** was photographed flying with "other" swallows over Gold Creek at Cope Park (RA, MS photos) on July 14. Several pictures were subsequently emailed to local birders with nobody able to identify this bird. During the next week, images of this bird began circulating on the internet and



before long some of the best birders in the world were thinking the bird was an Ashy Wood Swallow, an Asian species never seen before in North America. Although the jury is still out and people are still struggling with this, the conclusion by many is that the bird was likely a melanistic, or aberrantly dark-plumaged locally occurring swallow. This is an instance where the pictures tell one story, and the other information outside of the photograph tells another. It will be fascinating to see where it finally rests with the experts.

A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** made a very brief appearance at a Mendenhall Valley residence on June 30<sup>th</sup> (KC). The bird was nicely photographed and there were hopes the bird would linger in the area, but that did not happen. An adult **Harris's Sparrow**, in breeding plumage, was seen and

photographed near Auke Bay on June 6<sup>th</sup> (MM, GV). Such an observation is very rare, as most sightings of this species are of immature birds during fall and winter.

Contributors: Bev Agler, BA; Bob Armstrong, RA; Debi Ballam, DB; Kathryn Crenshaw, KC; Rich Gordon, RG; Nick Hajdukovich, NH; Jeanne Josephson, JJ; Rich MacIntosh, RM; Deanna MacPhail, DM; Beth Peluso, BP; Patty Rose, PR; Deborah Rudis, DR; Mark Schwan, MS; Paul Suchanek, PS; Helena Zimmerman, HZ; Steve Zimmerman, SZ Compiled by Mark Schwan.

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

Despite the extreme hot and dry weather in Haines this summer, the birds appeared to arrive and stay in the area. I observed the usual birds at my feeders, including a slightly early arrival of **Rufous Hummingbirds**. The Golden-crowned sparrows migrated through and were replaced by the summer **Steller Jays**. Now the **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** are having a feast.

Our resident birder, Pam Randles, observed some unusual birds in our valley this year, and many successful nestings of the normal bird population. Her feeder was the home of regular **Pine Siskins**. She watched four eagle nests on the Chilkoot, each have two eaglets. They are about to fledge (as of August 26). Two of them hatched eaglets on June 12. Some unusual sightings included in April a **Yellow-Billed Loon** at Letnikof Cove and early May a **Yellow-Rumped Warbler** feeding at a sapsucker tree. Pam has nesting **Goshawks** near her house. One juvenile sprained a wing, and a neighbor called Alaska Bald Eagle Foundation (ABEF) falconer Cary Siefert. The Goshawk now resides at ABEF. In late July, early August two families of **Great Blue Herons** (2 parents and 2 juveniles) were observed, one at Lutak Inlet and one at Portage Cove. Now that the normal rainy weather has set back in, we will wait and see what birds abound.

### **Wrangell Bird Report** By Bonnie Demerjian – September 2009

Wrangell joined several other Southeast communities this summer in hosting **Eurasian Collared-doves**. Two birds were first spotted on June 4. Two days later, four birds appeared at the same location in town. The site is a house whose owner regularly feeds **Rock Doves** so perhaps the collared doves were attracted by those birds. A few days later an observer living on the Stikine River delta also reported a single collared-dove at his cabin.

**Black-headed Grosbeaks** also put in appearance several times during the summer beginning in early June. Two were spotted on the river that month and individuals were reported again in town early in September.





*Photo by Steve Zimmerman, June 26*

Another accidental visitor drew its own out-of-town observers. A **Gray Catbird** arrived in a local yard in mid June. It sang much of each afternoon, fruitlessly seeking a mate until June 30<sup>th</sup> when it no longer appeared. This bird normally ranges as far north as central British Columbia and may have taken a wrong turn downriver to end up in Wrangell.

**Cedar Waxwings** arrived around June 7 this year, increasing in early July and are still here. Red crossbills have also been around in larger than usual numbers all summer.

A birding trip on the Stikine in early June reported 80 species including **Ruffed Grouse**, **Black and Vaux's Swift**, **Western Wood-pewee**, **Least and Hammond's Flycatcher**, **Bank Swallow**, **Gray-cheeked Thrush**, **American Redstart**, and **MacGillivray's Warbler**. High water conditions flooding marshes hindered hoped-for sightings of targeted American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Sora and Cinnamon Teal.

Just as they herald spring, **Sandhill Cranes** remind us that fall is here. They were heard overhead from the Stikine flats on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. It must be almost time to clean out the feeders and settle down to counting juncos.

## **SUNNY POINT REPORT** By Mary Lou King

These **Green-winged Teal** were taking a peaceful break on a drift log in our pond. The resident eagles must be off eating salmon and hunting season has not started yet. There were also 30 Canada Geese out on the flats taking advantage of the peace.



**Bird Report by Bill Newman:** Check this bird out. It is a perfect match for the **Eurasian Collared Dove**, pictured in the 3rd edition of the Nat. Geo. Birds of N. America page 237. The map shows it in the Florida area. This was photographed at my cabin on the Stikine River, Farm Island yesterday 6-8-09. I have many more photos. I can be reached on my cell 907-518-0737. Going back out to the river today.



**From: Whats Up** Compiled Weekly by Peg Tileston

On behalf of the Alaska Women's Environmental Network (AWEN), Alaska Center for the Environment (ACE), and Alaska Conservation Alliance (ACA)

“BLUE HIGHWAY” a new film by Costa Del Mar sunglasses, explores whether Alaska should build a ROAD from JUNEAU to the KATZEHIN RIVER DELTA. The film crew visited Haines, Juneau, and the Lynn Canal in the summer 2008 and debuted the film at the Teva Mountain festival in June 2009. To see the film, go to <http://www.bluehighway.org/>.

\*\*ALASKA STATE PARKS is recruiting CAMPGROUND HOST and other volunteer positions for the coming summer. Campground hosts stay in a campground and assist the ranger with visitor contact and maintenance. Hosts live in their own RV or trailer and the campsite is provided for free. A small stipend is provided if the minimum time commitment is met. Other volunteer positions include ranger assistant, trail crew, park caretaker and natural history interpreter. Housing and a small stipend are available if the minimum time commitment is met. Click on <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/vip/> to visit the Park's Volunteer web site for more information on these full-time volunteer positions. Click [dnr.pksvol@alaska.gov](mailto:dnr.pksvol@alaska.gov) to send an e-mail to request information or to request a 2010 Volunteer Catalog.

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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*.

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