

# 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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**Please note: Instead of a regular Juneau Audubon meeting on the second Thursday of November, we are taking advantage of the opportunity to attend the following meeting:**

## **“Where cold is hot— a Murrelets eye view of Glacier Bay”**

**Friday, November 6, 7:00 P.M., Egan Auditorium on the UAS Juneau campus**

Matt Kirchhoff will talk about what they learned in the summer, 2009, when members of the Juneau Chapter, along with other volunteers, converged on Glacier Bay to participate in a study of Marbled Murrelets and Kittlitz’s Murrelets. They are species of high conservation concern, and Glacier Bay is an important population center for both, with an estimated 4,900 Kittlitz’s Murrelets and 41,400 Marbled Murrelets occurring there.

### **Juneau October 2009 Bird Highlights By Mark Schwan**

This will be an abbreviated report, as many birders were traveling during the last portions of the month and the deadline for submission to the newsletter was quite early, in order to have the newsletter distributed in time to promote Matt Kirchhoff’s murrelet presentation at UAS on November 6. Still, it was a fascinating period, as birders took advantage of unseasonably nice weather during the first half of the month and found several exciting birds. Of course, the highlight of the “month” was a bird discovered at the end of September, but it was too late to get it into last month’s newsletter. Here are a few highlights.

A **Northern Hawk Owl** was reported along the airport dike in early October (JE), and then another bird (or same bird?) was found at the same location on October 11, (GV, PS, BA, MS). The fall arrival of **Anna’s Hummingbird** seemed early, and could almost be classified as an invasion, as perhaps 4 different birds were in Juneau during the first week of October. One bird was seen repeatedly at the Glacier Gardens in the Mendenhall Valley (BA, NH, photos) during the first week of October. Gus van Vliet saw one at his feeder at Auke Bay on October 1. Patty Rose had an individual visiting her feeder from October 8 through at least mid month, and a probable Anna’s made a brief visit at another Auke Bay residence on October 10 (DB). A female **Black-backed Woodpecker** was nicely photographed at Point Louisa on October 9 (DJ, photos). Another individual was found along the Outer Point Trail on North Douglas Island on October 15 (PS). This species is very scarce in Juneau, but most sightings seem to come in spring and fall times.

The local bird find of the year was certainly the **Great Crested Flycatcher** found on September 29 at the UAS student housing (NH, GV, photos). First detected by an unusual and loud call, the bird was seen taking red oshier dogwood berries from shrubs adjacent to one of the student residences. The bird remained quite loyal to this site over the next week and was subsequently seen by many birders. This represents only the second record for the state of Alaska; as the only other record is from Middleton Island, on September 29 (also), 1990, when a bird was collected by the late M. E. "Pete" Isleib.



*Gray Catbird*

*Photo by Patty Rose*

A big surprise was **the Gray Catbird** that made a brief visit to Paul Suchanek's home feeding station at North Douglas on October 13. Many birders saw and photographed the bird that afternoon. Paul said in Eaglechat that the catbird has not been seen since the first day of sightings - a classic one day wonder. This record was the first for Juneau and only the second for Southeast Alaska. A **Boreal Chickadee** was seen by Gus van Vliet on October 15. Any of the interior chickadee species are quite rare in Juneau. Single **White-throated Sparrows** were found along the airport dike early in the month (GV, PR) and a single bird was seen at a Mendenhall Valley

feeder the first week into the month

(DM).Contributors: Bev Agler, BA; Debi Ballam, DB; John Eiler, JE; Nick Hajdukovich, NH; Doug Jones, DJ; Deanna MacPhail; Patty Rose, PR; Mark Schwan, MS; Paul Suchanek, PS; Gus van Vliet, GV. Compiled by Mark Schwan.

This very strange looking Varied Thrush was seen on Sunny Point on October 19 by Mary Lou King



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## **It Wasn't an Ordinary Tuesday** By Nick Hajdukovich

It had been a dramatic day already with an unexpected event where a very powerful weedwacker flung a rock towards the back of my car, shattering the back window. I decided to bring the car in and have the window removed and have the empty hole where the window should be covered. While walking in the parking lot to my car I heard a strange bird call that I almost disregarded as a weird Steller's Jay. I live on the UAS campus in student housing and there are many jays around that make plenty of strange noises. For some reason I decided to track down the bird, bringing no binoculars or camera and expecting to just find a jay. The bird was very loud and it sounded like it was calling from the windowsill of one of the student apartments. After about 5 minutes of searching I finally got within feet of where it sounded like the bird was calling from. All of a sudden a bird popped into view from a small Red Dogwood

Bush just outside one of the apartment windows. I was only feet away from the bird and I recognized it as being some species of large flycatcher. I first thought Western Kingbird, however the bird promptly flew away showing its brilliant rufous colored tail and I knew it was something good. I had recalled Gus Van Vliet telling me about an Ash-throated Flycatcher that he saw in his yard and I concluded that this bird was something along those lines and something that I would need help to identify. I quickly called Gus and within minutes he was on the scene. After about 5 minutes we concluded that the bird was a Great Crested Flycatcher!



Throughout the next week the bird stayed around and I think just about every birder in Juneau and even one birder from Fairbanks made it out to the campus to check this bird out. Great Crested Flycatchers breed up and down the east coast and regularly make it as far west as east-central Alberta. A handful of birds have been spotted in California with sporadic sightings occurring in other states east of California. There is one record of this species in British Columbia and only one other record for Alaska. The British Columbia record and now both Alaska records for this species have all occurred on September 29! I guess we know what day to get out and search for Great Crested Flycatchers! Maybe my broken back window isn't so bad after all. Now if I could just get it fixed.... Bird on,

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### **Wrangell Bird Sightings – November 2009** By Bonnie Demerjian

October saw a few single birds on beaches and lakes around Wrangell including a **Black-bellied Plover**. An **American Coot** turned up at the golf course pond on the 19<sup>th</sup> along with 2 female **Ring-necked Ducks**. Six **Great-blue Herons** were also spotted fishing in the same pond. A **Wilson's Snipe** was seen several times, also at the golf course. A lone **Trumpeter Swan** was reported at Pat's Lake along with eight Ring-necked ducks. An observer on lower Etolin Island noted a flock of 200 **Pacific Loons** early in the month. Two male **Hooded Mergansers** were also spotted.

**Sooty Grouse** appeared at three different residential locations this past month.

Two observers reported **Anna's Hummingbirds** at feeders, one in town and another on Farm Island on the Stikine River delta along with a single **Red-winged Blackbird**. A number of **Northern Harriers**

were also reported feeding on delta rodents. Northern harriers, Merlins and Kestrels were reported on Wrangell Island and also Etolin.

The deceased **Northwest Crow** with warty growths that was described in last month's report was determined to possibly been infected with avian pox. Another crow with a similar growth on the cheek was spotted at a feeder in mid month. No other birds have yet been seen with this contagious disease. Wrangell birders were cautioned to clean their feeders and stop feeding for a time to allow birds to disperse. It's not easy, however, to discourage crows that have discovered a prime feeding spot.

A few **White-crowned Sparrows** are still around as well as a single **American Tree Sparrow**. **Pine Siskins**, which have been elsewhere for the past several months, have reappeared in their usual large numbers such as one flock of about 100 at the golf course. A number of **Red Crossbills** are still in town and **Pine Grosbeaks** were reported from Farm Island.



Bill Newman's photos of Cliff Swallows that nested on his cabin on Farm Island on the Stikine River Delta



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## Seward Peninsula Flora and Fauna By Merrill Jensen

This past June, my wife and I spent 4 days exploring the Seward Peninsula in search of native plants and migratory birds. This trip was originally planned as a plant collecting expedition for the Jensen-Olson Arboretum to look for endemic plant material for the Alpine Rock Garden. It quickly morphed into a study of the natural history of the area. Although we had planned the trip well in advance, the late spring weather was not conducive for finding some of the botanical gems I was looking for as they had not yet had enough snow-free time to awaken from their long arctic winter slumber. While driving the road system in search of plants, the dizzying array of migratory birds was astounding. Shorebirds impressed us with the distances they had traveled from the far reaches of the planet. Life-list birds were plentiful. And let's not forget the musk oxen. These primal animals were found (very easily I might add) all along the road system. Juveniles frolicked across the sun drenched tundra with the exuberance of youth. Then there was the scenery...vast expanses of tundra spread across the rolling foothills to the limestone spires of the Kigluaik Mountains. Everything had a manic feel to it with the unending light of the second week of June. I'll be doing an Audubon presentation later this winter with slides of these Seward Peninsula wonders.

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## **JUNEAU PUBLIC MARKET NOVEMBER 27 - 29, 2009.**

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. If you have saved ½ pint canning jars that we can reuse call Mary Lou King 789-7540. Also call her if you would like to help make jelly.

**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 Gwen at 523-2895

**SAVE A TREE! 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 and email to : **Membership**, [membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:membership@juneau-audubon-society.org)**

**Eagle feather collectors:** Please bring all your feathers to any public meeting or call Brenda for pickup- cell phone- 321-4739. Mark Schwan or Brenda Wright will collect them for shipping to Colorado! Thank you!

### **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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**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 \_\_\_\_\_.**

