

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

March 2010

Juneau Audubon Public Meeting

Thursday, March 11, 7:00 p.m.

UAS Egan Bldg, Glacier View Room 221/222

The Flora and Fauna of the Seward Peninsula By Merrill Jensen

Have you ever wondered what the other side of Alaska is like? How much different is the Seward Peninsula's plant and animal life compared to the rainforests of Southeast? Come to this month's Audubon presentation where Merrill Jensen will share his experiences from a trip to the tundra around Nome last June. See photos of a landscape completely without trees and with flowering plants and shrubs that are only inches tall. Hear about the wandering herds of musk oxen and reindeer (yes, reindeer!). Originally planned as a plant collecting trip for the Arboretum's alpine rock garden, this trip quickly evolved to include viewing the myriad birds that migrate there each spring to nest. Some of these travelers undertake epic, non-stop flights between their breeding and wintering grounds. We hope that you'll take advantage of this opportunity to see a different part of this amazing state...



BERNERS BAY BOAT TRIP – Get ready for a trip past the end of the road to Berners Bay. **This year's trips will be on April 24 at 8:30pm and May 1 at 8:30am and 1:30pm. The tickets will be on sale the end of March at Hearthside books. Save the Date!**

BIRD WALKS WILL BEGIN: **April 10, 8:00a.m.** at the airport dike trailhead, where ever that will be then? leader Mark Schwan **April 17, 8a.m,** Fish Creek, north Douglas, Leaders Paul Suchanek & Merrill Jensen.

Tracks and Sign Saturday Wild Program Nature Deficit Disorder by Kevin O'Malley

The sign above Albert Einstein's office at Princeton University reads "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." This statement may mean different things to different people. What it means to me is that our relationship and connection with nature most probably will never be able to be quantified or calculated and that scientific data will never be able to fully explain nature and the role it plays in our lives.

I was a proud young boy when I brought home a sack full of white bass from Lake Erie and the mouth of the Rocky River. My mom on the other hand was frankly, unsure. She probably had mixed emotions. Yeah! My son is a great fisherman, but if you know the silvery freshwater white bass, they are small and not easy to clean. Mom took action and we cleaned every last fish on Plain Dealer Newspaper in our backyard on the picnic table that my grandpa built.

I am not sure what I would have done without the Rocky River and the kid communities on the romps in the woods, the scouting missions to catch snakes, and Ronnie Kovach, "the Kovachky kid", my older neighborhood friend and teacher. It was freedom and safety all in one. Time spent in nature does something to us. It makes us pay attention and engages our senses, which to my knowledge not even the Wei can do. Via our senses children can create a connection with the world outside our heated boxes and most importantly disconnect from the analytical mind.

Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University, developed the theory of 8 types of intelligences. Nature Smart is the 8th intelligence. In Nature Smart, observation skills and categorizing things in nature are an important part of this intellect. The cleverness here is to slow down, giving us a chance to clear our mind, listen to our body and be in the present moment. This may be one of the most critical and important social abilities that has been lost due to the human addiction to television and the Internet.

Audubon has played an important role in educating children since it was founded 80 years ago. We have numerous nature centers throughout the country. Audubon is continuing its efforts here in Juneau with the Tracks and Signs Saturday Wild Program as a way for kids to connect to nature in a positive and playful way. Mentors, elders and families can help pave the way to a new hopeful future. Together, elders and teachers can learn from our kid communities and we in turn can model positive community members and watch our children grow.

Come join Audubon and community members (children are welcome and encouraged to come with a parent or older person) for the next Tracks and Sign Saturday Wild Program at the Boy Scout Camp on March 13th or March 27th at the Mt. Roberts Trail head on the Gold Creek side, both times from 10am to noon. We will explore what role the mouse (not the one in your hand) plays in predator prey relationships and look for bones as well as keep our eyes out for birds. Remember to dress for the weather and no dogs please. Call naturalist Kevin O'Malley at 321-7064 with any further questions.

**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**

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!

Managing Wildlife in Alaska: Predators, Prey & Politics
The Event and the Rally, Alaska Wildlife Alliance (www.akwildlife.org).

The Event - Friday, March 26, @ 7:00 pm @ the JAHC : Speakers will be: **Nick Jans**, wildlife photographer (My presentation will be a reading and slide show drawing on my 30 years of experience and many close encounters with Alaska wolves, from the Arctic to Southeast, both as a hunter and naturalist. I will of course offer my own perspective on predator control within this context. Title of my presentation is: Alaska's Wolves: The Essence of Wilderness.) ; **Victor Van Ballenberghe** (For my Friday evening talk I plan to speak about the changes I've seen over the past 36 years in how Alaska has managed wolves and bears as big game animals as well as predators on ungulates. In recent years as intensive management ("managing for abundance") has become the dominant theme, there have been large-scale programs to severely reduce wolves and bears in order to increase moose and caribou for hunters. I will examine the biological and public policy aspects of these control programs.); John **Toppenburg** (The Alaska Wildlife Alliance's position as well as the predator-prey relationship), Greg **Brown** (Will speak about the financial value of wildlife viewing, which includes how to create 2,000 new jobs and bring half a billion dollars into Alaska over the next four years), plus book signings by **Bob Armstrong, Nick Jans, and Mary Willson.**

The Rally - Saturday, March 27, @ Noon @ the Capitol: Speakers will be: Joel Bennett, Greg Brown, Alex Simon, Andrea Doll, Victor Van Ballenberghe, and John Toppenberg



Juneau Birding Notes for February, 2010 By Mark Schwan

Local birders let up somewhat during the month after attacking the new year with a vengeance, hoping to see their annual lists off to fast starts. The weather was unbelievably mild and lacking in precipitation. Perhaps the lack of snow and mild temperatures caused the paucity of birds visiting Juneau feeders. It seemed everyone was asking, "Where have all the birds gone?" Nevertheless, there were birds of interest located. Here are some highlights.

A lone **Eurasian Wigeon** was seen at the mouth of Fish Creek on 2/4 and 2/26 (PS). The **hybrid Common x Barrow's Goldeneye** continued to be seen, this time on 2/15 in Fritz Cove (PS). This unusual bird has over-wintered in Juneau for several years now. Another hybrid duck, certainly the highlight of the month, was an apparent **hybrid between a Hooded Merganser and a goldeneye**. This fascinating bird is covered in a separate article in this newsletter. Three **Hooded Mergansers** were seen in the Mendenhall River adjacent to Brotherhood Park on 2/22 (RF and class). Raptors of interest included at least 5 different observations of single **Sharp-shinned Hawks** (many obs). **Northern Goshawks** were seen in Auke Bay on 2/7 and 2/27 (GV) and at Brotherhood Park on 2/24 (PS). The **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk**, which has chosen to over-winter in Juneau, was spotted repeatedly throughout the month by many observers. The only **Merlin** report came from Thane Road on 2/4 (JR).

There are only one or two previous local winter records, so the **American Coot** hanging near DIPAC from 2/10-2/13 was quite a surprise (PS, BUK, PR). Very rare in Juneau, the **Iceland Gull** found at the Scout Camp on 2/5 (PS) was only the second local winter record. Two reports of **Glaucous Gull**, likely different birds, came from near the Scout Camp on 2/5 (PS) and Melvin Park on 2/19 (GV). The **Eurasian Collared-Doves** picked a good winter to try and establish themselves, as several continued to be seen during the month in the Meadow Lane-Radcliffe Road area (2 on 2/13 (JR), and 3 on 2/23 (GV)). A single **Downy Woodpecker** was spotted along the airport dike on 2/21 (GV), and an **American Three-toed Woodpecker** was found at Point Bridget on 2/19 (PS). Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** visited a valley feeder throughout the month, and the birds appeared to be a male and female (DM). As ubiquitous as they are around here in spring, summer, and fall, **American Robins** are hard to find during winter, but there were reports of two at Brotherhood Park on 2/15 (GV), one at Melvin Park on 2/19 (GV), and four at Fish Creek on 2/26 (PS). Finally, **American Tree Sparrows** were still locatable, with one to three birds hanging near the end of Industrial Blvd. and near the golf course (2/10-2/12, PS).

Contributors: Robert Fagen, RF, and biology students; Deanna MacPhail, DM; Julie Reynolds, JR; Patty Rose, PR; Paul Suchanek, PS; Brian Uher-Koch, BUK; Gus van Vliet, GV.

Hooded Merganser X Goldeneye Hybrid at Douglas Boat Harbor

By Paul Suchanek

On February 2, I noted a duck diving in Douglas Harbor which I thought at first glance to be a female hooded merganser but which on further examination proved to be an “odd” duck (see photo). I first thought it a hybrid with a bufflehead but on subsequent days noted it was about the same size as a goldeneye. After a quick internet search, I did find some images of hybrids between Hooded Mergansers and goldeneyes which seemed to match the bird fairly well. I suspect this bird may be a hybrid with a Barrow's Goldeneye as the white in the wing seems limited and the front of the head is quite steep, although short of genetic testing, it is impossible to be sure. The bird continued to be seen throughout the month of February both inside and just outside the harbor. It often dove for 20 to 25 seconds and came up with shells containing hermit crabs which it shook out of the shell and then devoured.



Hybrids of this type are very rare in North America and Alaska in particular, although I did get a report that there was a similar hybrid reported from Wrangell about 30 years ago. Although bird watchers cannot “count” this bird on their life list, it is certainly a rare bird and interesting in its own right. I check up on “Hogo” every few days in part because I’m also interested whether the bird is perhaps an immature male which may molt into adult plumage. A similar hybrid returned to its wintering grounds in California for at least five years so maybe it will reappear next winter.

DOGS AND MIGRATING BIRDS By Jeff Sauer

Spring is on its way to Southeast Alaska. And, with spring comes migrating birds and our spring bird walks. In conjunction with this, Juneau Audubon is attempting to deal with an ongoing problem on the Mendenhall refuge and Eagle River tideflats, with dogs chasing birds. The problem is that the refuge and the Eagle River Flats are used by thousands of shore birds and waterfowl in migration and they are an extremely important stop over for many species of birds to feed and rest. Some species have already come hundreds or thousands of miles to get here. And, from here some species will travel hundreds of miles to the arctic to nest. While these birds are here they need to recover from their trip and recharge. They must be able to seriously feed and rest in order to continue on their migration. If they are forced to stop resting and feeding, and take to the air to avoid charging dogs, they will burn up critical reserves. These are reserves they cannot afford to lose. If harassed enough by dogs they could die. They will not die here, but they may die after leaving Juneau as they have not built up enough reserves to cope with other stressors on their trip, such as bad weather.

Many dogs are well managed and behaved and do not go charging after shorebirds and ducks, but some do, and their owners seem oblivious to the potential impacts. This should not happen. It is not responsible dog handling and it is against the law. It is against the law to allow one's dog to harass wildlife. Harassing wildlife includes dogs chasing after birds causing them to flush, and it simply is not acceptable. We will be working to educate the public and dog owners, and possibly take other steps to reduce this problem. Juneau Audubon members can also help by politely trying to educate the public on this issue. More in the next month's newsletter.

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For first time members or renewals to the National Audubon Society, please mail this form to:
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You will receive the *National Audubon Magazine* plus Juneau Chapter newsletter *The Raven*.

\$20 (1-year introductory rate) _____; \$15 (1-year student/senior rate) _____
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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*.

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