

# 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

October 2010

## **ELECTIONS AND GROUP SLIDE SHOW, THURSDAY**

**OCTOBER 14, UAS Egan Bldg., Glacier View Room 221, 7:00 p.m.**

The October meeting will be a combined short business meeting, election of officers, and group slide show- social event. All are welcome and encouraged to bring images to share with the group. You need not be a member of Audubon to attend; anyone can participate in the slide show, however, only members may vote in the election.

**Election!** Juneau Audubon Society will hold the annual election for the four officer positions. Our officers serve a term of one year; so all officers need to be elected each year. The candidates at the time of writing are Mark Schwan for president, Jeff Sauer for vice-president, Patty Rose for treasurer, and we are still looking for someone willing to run/serve as secretary. Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the annual meeting. We are especially hoping to find a candidate for secretary, as this is an important position for the Chapter, and we would appreciate someone interested in Audubon to come forward and offer their candidacy for this position. You don't need to be experienced on the board to be a good secretary; the position mainly requires one to be good at taking notes and accurately recording the business of the chapter at our board meetings.

Moreover, we are in need of finding individuals that would be willing to serve as president and vice president starting in the fall of 2011. This would require gaining some experience on the board prior to serving in this position. We currently have vacancies on the board for two committees, programs and conservation. The conservation chair is a critical member of the board, as this person is key to helping track environmental issues of interest to the chapter and to help develop positions on such issues for the board. If anyone is interested in joining the board to serve in these vacant positions, or might be inclined toward running/serving as president or vice president in 2011, please contact Mark Schwan or any of the other officers or board members for more information. The chapter does a lot for the community and the region, and it is a great forum in which to participate, however the chapter is in need of new people willing to join and take the lead!

**Program:** Once we have completed the short business meeting and election of officers we will do our group slide show. This is always lots of fun. We ask everyone to bring about 10 to 15

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 (it hasn't been used now for several years) and a laptop computer and LCD projector. People with digital images should bring them on a CD or small media storage device that can be connected to our laptop. We plan to have refreshments. Thanks and hope to see you there.



*Blue Rock Thrush Japan*  
Mark Schwan

### **Eagle Feather Collectors**

If you have been collecting eagle feathers under the Juneau Audubon Society USFWS permit, please bring them to the public meeting or call Brenda at 321-4739 so that they can be sent into the National Eagle Repository in Colorado. Our old permit expired in March, so you can get a copy of the new permit by calling Brenda or sending an e-mail to [membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:membership@juneau-audubon-society.org) Thanks for your help.

### **Public Market in November**

Do you have any books, videos, or items with a bird decoration you would like to donate to the Juneau Audubon booth for the Public Market in November? Do you have any ideas for members to create Christmas or holiday decorations out of natural materials? Do you have any ideas we could use for painting or making bird magnets. Would you like to help make jam or jelly? Volunteers are cheerfully put to work! Contact Mary Lou King or Brenda Wright by e-mail or phone. Thanks for sharing your ideas!

## **Juneau Bird Notes for September, 2010**

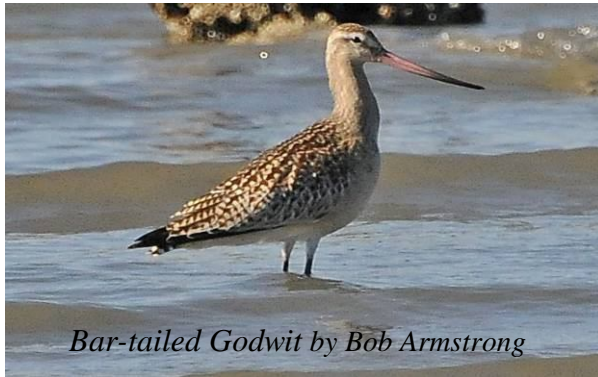
By Mark Schwan

The weather was terrific during much of the month but birding seemed relatively slow. Perhaps our migratory friends were on the fast track south? Remember to go to [eBird.org](http://eBird.org) for seeing how the local species' graphic calendars developed through the month of September, but here are a few highlights.

The **Osprey** seen near the gazebo on the airport dike trail on September 19 was the first known report in the Juneau area this year (PR, RG). Later on, Gus van Vliet reported single birds on back to back days, with one over Pioneer Marsh on September 29 and another on September 30 at mile 15 Glacier Highway. A **Gyr Falcon** flying over Crystal Lake on the glacier forelands on September 30 was a very nice find (RG). **Peregrine Falcons** were seen at various times through



the month by several observers, with the latest on September 26 at the beginning of the airport dike trail (GV, MM). A juvenile **Bar-tailed Godwit** was located near the mouth of Eagle River on September 15 (RA, MS). Interestingly, earlier this same day, a juvenile Bar-tailed was also seen in Gustavus by Bruce Paige.



*Bar-tailed Godwit by Bob Armstrong*

Patty Rose found a **Ring-billed Gull** on September 15 amongst the hoards of gulls downtown near Taku Smokeries. Our “famous” **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was staying pretty loyal (along with lots of other gulls) early in the month to the new fill area between the end of the runway and the Mendenhall River, with a number of observations reported. Given the apparent new hangout of gulls in this area, it has fostered some concern that airport wildlife hazard personnel could literally target these

birds. By month’s end, gulls seemed to have pretty much forsaken the area. No one reported seeing airport personnel hazing these birds, and we hope “Lester” (Bob Armstrong’s name for our bird) is still alive and well. **Glaucous Gull** reports included one at Auke Bay on September 1 (GV) and one downtown on September 6 (DD).

A **Mourning Dove** showed up just at month’s end, September 28, near mile 15 Glacier Highway (JJ). The bird was relocated and photographed by Nick Hajdukovich on September 30 and subsequently seen by other birders the same day. One **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was seen along Radcliffe Road on September 11 (NH), and another single bird was seen in the same area on September 23 (MS). A male **Anna’s Hummingbird** made a brief appearance at a Douglas Island feeder on September 19 (PR). **Northern Flickers** were reported by various observers through the month. The only Passerines of note included a very late **Barn Swallow** seen near the Juneau airport on September 27 (NH), a **Townsend’s Solitaire** found up on Thunder Mountain on September 13 (PS), a **Blackpoll Warbler** seen and photographed on Douglas Island on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September (PR), and a tan-morph **White-throated Sparrow** at an Auke Bay feeder on September 27 (GV).



*Mourning Dove  
by Nick Hajdukovich*

Contributors included: Robert Armstrong, RA; Doug Daniels, DD; Rich Gordon, RG; Jeanne Josephson, JJ; Nick Hajdukovich, NH; Molly McCafferty, MM; Patty Rose, PR; Mark Schwan, MS; Paul Suchanek, PS; Gus van Vliet, GV.

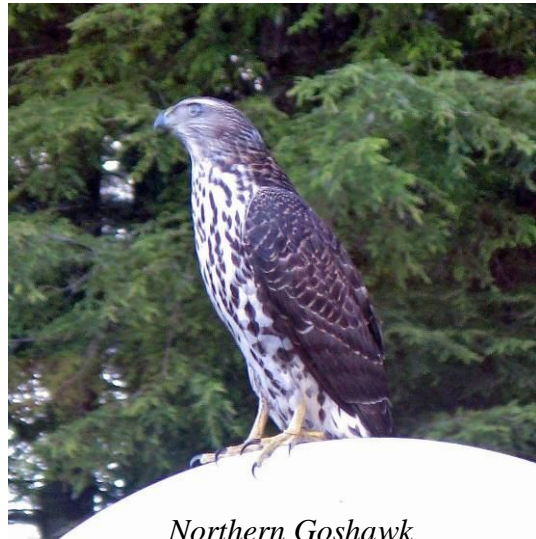
## Wrangell Bird Report

by Bonnie Demerjian

**American Robins, Varied Thrushes** and **Cedar Waxwings** stoking up on Mountain Ash berries have provided the most activity for Wrangell birders this month. At the end of August an observer heard **Sandhill Cranes** on Zarembo Island. There has been speculation for a few years that a small number of the birds nest there. In mid-month flocks of cranes began to show up on their southward migration. These appear in smaller, more scattered flocks than in the spring.

**Northern Shrikes** aren't a common bird around Wrangell but three were spotted in Wrangell Island early in September.

Several chicken owners have had their flocks raided by a **Northern Goshawk** this month. The juvenile pictured was using a satellite dish as a perch while it waited for the chickens to reappear after its initial ambush.



*Northern Goshawk  
By Jamie Reimer*

“Doc” Davenport, Wrangell fisherman and physician, was rescued from his sinking boat only weeks ago. Prior to that event he was fishing outside of Sitka and reports this encounter with what were probably **Fork-tailed Storm-petrels**: "I had an unusual situation while fishing this year. The weather was fine, and I was fishing offshore, so I drifted for the night instead of running in and anchoring..... During the night I kept hearing strange sounds from the aft end of the boat. I got up and shined a light out the back door toward the cockpit. I had left the cockpit computer on (which I often do) and I saw many birds fluttering around the greenish light and twittering.... there must have been a hundred of them, and they were attracted to it like "moths to a flame".... I couldn't identify them because of the light and the motion, so I gave up and went back to bed. The next morning, when I went to work, I found about 20 of them huddled in the cockpit, soaking wet from rain. I picked them up and set them on deck, and even took about 10 of them into the galley to get warmed up and dried out. I guess the therapy worked, because they eventually flew away one by one. They were a tube-nosed small dappled bird, and while I had no way of identifying them with certainty, I suspect they were petrels. Never had anything happen like that before."

A fall boat trip down Zimovia Strait netted sightings and soundings of **Western Grebes, Surf Scoters** and a **Barred Owl**. Its insistent call from a nearby island awoke me in my berth at 4 one tranquil morning and made me glad, once again, that I live in Southeast Alaska.

## Archaeopteryx

by Kevin O'Malley

Archaeopteryx or “ancient wing” was a feather wearing reptile with claws on its wings. Some ornithologists believe it to be the evolutionary link between reptiles and modern day birds. What are the chances that birds evolved from Jurassic Period reptiles? What defines a bird? To classify birds you must think about what separates birds from other animals. An easy way to do that is to ask yourself what makes them light? A quick light list prioritizes feathers, hollow “strut supported” bones, beaks, and uniquely efficient digestive systems. These are all features that make a bird light and categorize birds together. Another feature that is often left out is that birds are nest builders and therefore egg layers. As a child I had a deep fascination and connection with bird nests and neighborhood songbirds. I climbed trees and looked in their nests for eggs and devised creative ways to catch a few local songbirds.

I would like to single out avian construction of nests as a critically important act birds perform to survive. Picture a bird’s nest in your “mind’s eye”. What does it symbolize? Artwork, necessity and perfectly engineered species specific construction are just a few things that come to mind when thinking about this stable piece in a bird’s life. I wonder what Archaeopteryx’s nest looked like.

A recent encounter with a very primitive style of nest building called a scrape has sparked my interest. This construction is so simple and basic that there must be multiple elements built in to make it work. Semipalmated Plovers build their scrape type nest out in open rocky areas with minimal organization and within the laws of gravity. Their eggs are laid in a slight depression so they do not roll away. The pyriform shaped eggs are actually designed to roll in a circle. Good engineering; there is nothing holding them in! The eggs are totally exposed to the elements and to terrestrial and avian predators.

Recently I unknowingly approached a Semipalmated Plover’s scrape nest. The plover’s behavior told my body to slow down and pay attention. By the time the plover dropped its wing presumably injured, it was alluring me in a choreographic hoax. It stopped me in my tracks. Two more steps and in the wrong direction and I would have ended life. At my feet were four oval greenish randomly and sparsely black spotted eggs intricately placed in a chafe on the rocky ground. Hidden in plain sight cannot come without a cost but seems to work well for the plovers. Here is where the relationship between the nest building behavior and the broken wing dance signify a successful evolutionary development.

Since “ancient wing” what display practices or physiological adaptations connected with nest building survived? The behavioral creativity of Belted Kingfishers play a part in the health and well being of its nest inhabitants. Kingfishers are burrow nesters and excavate earthen material from cut banks, such as found along the Mendenhall River. It starts in a hole in the cut bank and leads to a tunnel that opens to a dirt floor nursery room. In the subterranean condo the eggs and altricial young, naked at birth, are protected from the elements and their terrestrial predators. The choices the kingfisher makes in its avian nest construction make sense and the advantages obvious. Check out this seemingly unwise behavioral choice that involves bees and wasps. In *The Birder’s Handbook*, Ehrlich, Dobkin and Wheye write about birds choosing nesting sites



where other organisms protect their young. “Mississippi Kites, Aplomando Falcons and other raptors have been known to associate with bees and wasps which may ward off botflies on their chicks.” What’s in it for the bees and wasps? Is there some type of co-evolution going on here? Choose your neighbors carefully, there seems to be a fine line here.

The American Robin uses a different approach and it’s cup nest is both isolated, camouflaged, and also combined with some physiological housekeeping. Fecal matter smells...phew! And, it may attract predators. How can a robin avoid giving away the smell of the nest? In the early stages of feeding the adult robins will carry worms to the nest, feed the young, and on the roundtrip grab the fecal sacs and ingest them. The energy efficacy is unique and fecal sacs still have good nutrients that have not been digested by the chicks. How does this function relate to survival of the species?

As nest structure moved to the trees so did the specialized behavioral techniques and physiological functions that advance each species. The plover’s scrape nest would not have been as successful without the adult putting its own life on the line in the broken-wing display. As would the American robin’s offspring not thrive as well without the physiological adaptation of the fecal sacs. When reptiles such as Archaeopteryx evolved into birds they left some things behind such as clawed wings and teeth, then carried others forward such as feathers and ground nesting. Let’s see what happens in another 150 million years or so.

### **Diesel Clean-up Campaign**

Juneau Audubon has recently been asked to endorse the Diesel Clean-up Campaign. This national effort was formed in 2005 to help raise awareness regarding practical principles that if implemented will significantly reduce diesel pollution nationwide. This is a very important environmental and health issue, and should be of interest to our members. The information that follows is taken from campaign narrative provided to us.

In the United States, more than 11 million engines use diesel fuel to build our nation’s buildings and roads and to transport our goods and citizens. However, particulate matter pollution from diesel emissions shortens the lives of an estimated 21,000 people nationwide every year. In addition, the cancer risk that diesel exhaust poses is 7 times greater than the cancer risk from all other 181 air toxics tracked by EPA combined.

The Diesel Clean-up Campaign, a collaboration of organizations throughout the country, is committed to the following goals: To reduce direct diesel fine particulate matter emissions 40 percent by the year 2012, 55 percent by 2015, and 70 percent by 2020. Achieving these goals would save tens of thousands of lives between now and 2030, improve health and well-being by reducing ailments such as heart and asthma attacks, and help mitigate global warming.

Although there are clean diesel regulations for new engines, there are millions of old, dirty diesels in the U.S. that may be in use for decades to come. The good news is that retrofits available today can nearly eliminate diesel particulate matter and black carbon emissions. Retrofitting diesel engines with filters is one of the few actions that will have immediate climate

benefits, complementing long-term efforts to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Governments and industries must act now to implement federal, state and local pollution control initiatives to reduce diesel pollution. To learn more on this, go to the following web address:

[www.catf.us/projects/diesel](http://www.catf.us/projects/diesel) .

### Register for Alaska Bird Conference by October 8 for Early-Bird Discount



*Trumpeter Swans Haines Pass*

The 14th Alaska Bird Conference will be held in Anchorage this year on November 16, 17, and 18 at the Hotel Captain Cook. Register by October 8 for early-bird discounts. Conference highlights include keynote speaker Theunis Piersma, the awards ceremony (who will win the Pete Isleib Award?), and, of course, all of the fascinating presentations about Alaska bird ecology. We are offering student rates, single-day registration, and single-session registration.

Go to [www.AlaskaBirdConference.com](http://www.AlaskaBirdConference.com) to register and for more information about the conference program and accommodations.

By the way, it's not too late to sponsor the conference and/or purchase booth space in the tradeshow! This is a great opportunity to highlight your organization's product or service. Please email me ([lcosta@audubon.org](mailto:lcosta@audubon.org)) for details, or go to [www.AlaskaBirdConference.com](http://www.AlaskaBirdConference.com).

### 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 \_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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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