

# 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>

Volume 38, Number 9

Juneau Audubon Society

May

## JUNEAU AUDUBON ACTIVITIES Saturday Activities

**Dress for the weather. \*Rubber boots or waterproof shoes required for this walk.**

Date	Location/Event	Time/Comments	Leader(s)
May 5	Sunny Point to airport dike; a walk through the wetlands on low tide. *	8am - noon /meet at airport dike parking; shuttle from there.	Mark Schwan
May 12	Hike toward mouth of Mendenhall River from dike trail parking area. *	8:00am Meet at dike trail parking area at end of Radcliffe Road	Jeff Sauer
May 19  International Migratory Bird Day	Community Garden by Montana Creek.  Bird Banding Demonstrations and kids activities  Arctic Tern viewing	7:00-11:00am  Birdwalk after demonstrations.*  3:00-5:00pm; at Photo Point past glacier visitors' center	Gwen Baluss  Jeff Sauer for later birdwalk  Gwen Baluss
May 26	Brotherhood Bridge	8:00am Meet at parking lot on north side of river.	Gwen Baluss
June 2	Sandy Beach	7:00am  Meet at parking lot	Patty Rose
June 9	Moose Lake	8:00am Meet at parking lot on Back Loop Rd. next to bridge.	Steve Zimmerman

## SATURDAY WILD -- SUMMER 2012

These free public summer walks are led by experts and are interesting and fun for both adults and children. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Dress for the weather.

**June 23 – Jensen-Olsen Arboretum 11:00am** The Jensen-Olsen Arboretum is located] in an area known locally as “Out the Road”. The Arboretum is just past Mile 23 on Glacier Highway. Enjoy a tour of the Arboretum, identify birds, and enjoy the Minus Tide Walk on the beach by the Arboretum.

**July 14 – Mount Roberts Tram 8:00 am** Meet at the Tram Office on South Franklin Street. Linda Nicklin will explore flowers and other plants and Audubon naturalists and birders will identify birds and other wildlife. If you arrive at 8 a.m., the tickets for the tram can be purchased for a reduced rate.

**August 18 – Fish Creek 10:00am** Fish Creek is located at Mile 8.3 North Douglas Highway. Meet at the parking lot on the town side of the Fish Creek Bridge. Learn about both mushrooms and fish during this walk.

**September 8 – Eaglecrest 10:00 a.m.** Meet beside the Lodge. Berries will be found and identified. After getting to know the berries you will be free to pick berries on your own, so bring along something to put them in.

### Other Upcoming Events:

[Please Join Friends of Admiralty Island for a 4.5-Hour Boat Cruise to Hawk Inlet on Admiralty Island on Sunday, May 20, 2012.](#)

[We will depart from Don Statter Public Boat Harbor at 1:30 pm.](#)

We will travel aboard an Allen Marine catamaran which accommodates 120 people. Trip cost is \$35 per person over age 12 and \$10 per person 12 and under. Tickets can be purchased from Hearthside Books (downtown or Nugget Mall), Rainy Retreat Books, or Juneau Arts & Culture Center (JACC). Complimentary coffee and tea. Other beverages and snacks may be purchased onboard.

This is a great opportunity to see marine mammals, sea birds, the picturesque and rockbound shoreline south of Pt. Retreat, and historically important Hawk Inlet on the west side of Admiralty Island. Specialists will join us to discuss natural history, the role which people have played in that history, and the natural resource values that need to be factored into the U.S. Forest Service’s consideration of the Greens Creek Mine’s proposal for massive tailings disposal in nearby Admiralty Island National Monument. The public comment deadline for this tailings disposal proposal is June 4, so join us and become informed. Questions? Contact [admiralty\\_friends@yahoo.com](mailto:admiralty_friends@yahoo.com)



*Paul Suchanek and birding group, April 2012*

## **An Appreciation**

By Mark Schwan

Paul Suchanek will be leaving Juneau later this summer or early fall, moving to more southerly climes. When Paul leaves, the Juneau birding community will lose a long-time friend and great resource. I first met Paul when he came to Juneau in 1986 to take a job with Fish and Game. We worked together for 16 years in the same office, both having studied birds in college but happily taking careers working with fisheries management, where job opportunities were much more plentiful. I knew Paul was interested in birds and he enjoyed birding, however, it seemed his enthusiasm for birding and listing intensified through the early 1990s. After that, he pretty much has left everyone else in the dust.

Back in the year 2000, Paul was the first birder ever to see 200 species of birds in the immediate Juneau area in one year. If you are not a birder, you really don't know how hard this is to do. He did this one more time since then. Only one other birder has now done it. Paul has seen well over 300 species

of birds in Alaska and his cumulative list of species for Juneau totals 276. However, these milestones are eclipsed by some of Paul's other accomplishments when you examine the intensity of his birding and the energy and detail he has devoted to recording and documenting his field observations through time. Most birders go out and look for birds, and maybe keep a species list, and that might be it. During the last 20-plus years, Paul has recorded many thousands of observations of birds where he has included counts of individual species, by date and location. Paul's observations have proven invaluable to local conservation efforts.

Perhaps Paul's favorite area to bird has been Point Bridget State Park and the adjacent waters of Berners Bay. He likes to get out there early and walk a similar circuit each time, covering a variety of habitats, which includes scanning the marine waters with spotting scope. Paul has identified and counted the birds he has seen or heard, and entered this information into his computer database system. Through the years, he has completed approximately 430 birding outings to Point Bridget, and has written a detailed monograph on the status and distribution of birds for the area. His data were most helpful in getting Berners Bay designated as an Important Bird Area, or IBA.

When Bob Armstrong took the lead in preparing the application for IBA status for the Mendenhall Wetlands, his job was easier with the inclusion of 15,000+, that's right, 15,000 entries of bird counts by species offered up by Paul. In fact, again, these

detailed accounts were crucial for the designation of the Mendenhall Wetlands IBA.

Paul has volunteered his birding expertise in a variety of other ways. He has led bird walks for Juneau Audubon, been a key group leader on Christmas Bird Counts, helped Alaska Audubon with Birdathons, and been a constant contributor to Eaglechat since its inception. When the first Bioblitz hit Juneau several years ago, Paul offered to serve as the bird team leader. Hopefully he will do it one last time this year, if he is here.

In 2008, Paul began entering his birding records into eBird. This is the online citizen science project where birders enter their observations into a centralized computer database which can then be viewed online by anyone. Getting his records into eBird gave Paul a stronger purpose for birding and rejuvenated his birding interest. At this writing, Paul has entered 2,935 “complete” checklists for his Alaska birding, where every species with counts of individuals seen during an outing were recorded, and he has also entered more than 3,000 additional “incidental” checklists, where only the highlight species were entered. When the eBird administrators needed people to oversee and serve as “gatekeepers” for eBird entries in Alaska, Paul volunteered to be the regional editor for southeast Alaska.

I reckon I disagree with Joni Mitchell, you can know what you are losing before it is gone. For the birders in Juneau this will hit us hard. Finally, beyond all that he has contributed to the birding community, we will miss him because he is a good guy,

always seeming a straight shooter, ethical, and respectful of others. So, thank you Paul, and we wish you the best in good health, happiness, and . . . good birding.



*Paul Suchanek looking out toward Berners Bay, May 2007*

## **Bird Notes from around Southeast**

### **Spring Migration at Ketchikan**

By Andy Piston

After a winter that felt like it might never end, spring migration got off to a relatively slow start at Ketchikan. The first songbird to arrive in numbers, the American Robin, was a week or two behind schedule and did not start trickling through until mid-March, with larger flocks not arriving until the end of the month. Fox Sparrows, the other eagerly awaited songbird arrival in March, did not arrive in numbers until the last few days of the month. Small flocks of Trumpeter Swans were noted by many observers throughout March, and a handful of non-wintering gulls, California, Herring, and Bonaparte's began arriving by the second week. Late in the month we had our first Ruby-crowned Kinglets (29 March; AWP) and Band-tailed Pigeons (31 March; CAF) arrive right on schedule. The first Rufous Hummingbird of the spring arrived

on 31 March, which is a fairly typical date for our first arrival (CAF).

The relatively slow start in March gave way to a mix of early to average arrivals in April. Both Violet-green and Tree swallows arrived during the second week of April, but mixed into the flocks at Ward Lake were new early arrival records for Cliff Swallow (two birds on 14 April; SCH, WTY) and Northern Rough-winged Swallow (19 April; AWP, SCH, WTY). The Cliff Swallows were nearly a month earlier than our previous record arrival date, and the Northern Rough-winged Swallow was nearly two weeks earlier than our previous local record. Yellow-rumped and Townsend's warblers arrived right on time in mid-April, but an Orange-crowned Warbler on 14 April tied our earliest arrival date. Several shorebirds made earlier than normal appearances, including three Western Sandpipers, two Dunlin, and a Black-bellied Plover on 14 April (JHL, AWP). Herring spawn on the Ketchikan road system attracted large numbers of gulls and Surf Scoters by mid-April, with high counts of over 6,000 gulls at Coast Guard Beach on 14 April, including approximately 3,500 Bonaparte's Gulls (AWP). At nearby South Point Higgins Beach, a rapidly increasing concentration of Surf Scoters was estimated to include 6,500 birds on 22 April (AWP). On 21 April, a massive movement of Red-necked Phalaropes moved north up Tongass Narrows and 7,300 were counted flying past in just three hours (AWP). Although flocks of Snow Geese made a decent showing through early April, the often tremendous spectacle of migrating Canada, Greater White-fronted, and

Cackling Geese that occurs in most years had not yet taken place as of 22 April.

Apart from regular migration, highlights included a Black-footed Albatross that was found and photographed in Revillagigedo Channel, just a short distance from Ketchikan on 4 April 2012 (BW, MC). Although this species is regular offshore of Southeast Alaska, this is the farthest into inside waters near Ketchikan we have record of. A male Purple Finch made rounds of several north end feeders through much of the winter and into early April (JFK, CAF, KMR), and at least one female was observed at two different feeding stations (JFK, KMR). Although the now resident Eurasian Collared-Dove population seemed down a bit by spring, observations of nest material collecting (PSD), courting, and several copulations (AWP, KMR) suggests their numbers may soon start increasing. At the time of this writing (22 April), spring migration is just hitting peak timing for many species and the forecast for the next three weeks is calling for hot birding with periods of migrants blotting out the sun.

Observers: Mike Criss (MC), Phil Doherty (PSD), Cheryl Fultz (CAF), Steve Heintz (SCH), Jim Lewis (JHL), Andy Piston (AWP), Kathy Ripley (KMR), Will Young (WTY), Bob Widness (BW).

Black footed albatross photo by Mike Criss.



## **Bird News from Haines**

**By Pam Randles**

The spring migration is in full swing now. Varied Thrushes started singing on March 28 and two days later were joined by waves of robins. Rufous Hummingbirds arrived on April 10. Surf Scoters began arriving on March 24 and started molting. The large rafts will probably be here until late May.

The Ts'ats'ee Bird Observatory had its first training April 15 – 22. They first banded many Ruby-Crowned Kinglet males. The first female arrived on the last day of the training. As the week went along more species arrived: Dark-Eyed Juncos, Robins, Red-Breasted Sapsuckers, Golden Crowned Sparrows and Fox Sparrows. A Wilson's Snipe and a Sharp-Shinned Hawk were captured and released as well. Ten bander candidates took the training. The Observatory hopes to have another training in summer.

Bonaparte's Gulls have been hovering around Lutak Inlet, probably waiting for hooligan to show up. The Chilkat River is a major flyway for waterfowl. So far this year, Snow Geese, Pintails, Green-Winged Teal, Shovelers, American and Eurasian Wigeons, Canada Geese and Mallards have been observed. Two Sandhill Cranes and several Trumpeter Swans were seen flying over.

Birdathon will be held April 29 to May 5 with a celebration bonfire on May 6. The focus for this year is to try to identify migration hot spots for future migration a banding station. Summer Eagle nest surveys are also beginning soon.

## **Uncle Ed and Wildflowers By Prill (Isleib) Mollick, Smoky Mountains, N.C.**

My brother Pete's middle name was Edward, after our fathers oldest brother.

Uncle Ed was self taught in many areas of nature. He studied and learned the names of birds, flowers, and trees. He had a warm and jovial personality. In some of his retirement years he was the Nature Counselor at the 4-H camp in Hartford County, Connecticut, where all the campers called him "Uncle Ed". As a young teen Pete became a camp Junior Counselor.

One day Uncle Ed challenged a group of campers to see who could find 3 different kinds of wild flowers that Uncle Ed could not identify but that they could identify. For reward he would give that person a dollar. (In the 1950's, candy bars only cost a nickel.)

The campers scattered out into the woods to hunt for the mystery wild flowers. You

guessed it. Pete came back with several different kinds of wild flowers that Uncle Ed did not know. And yes, Pete knew what they were.

## Bluets

Bluets are one of the earliest spring wild flowers to bloom here. In early March we see them in patches of their colorful blooms in our back yard and also along country roads.

They are a tiny flower and usually a rich, deep blue but may also be found as light blue or even white. It is a low plant with erect, slender stems about 3 to 5 inches high. It has a flower of four petals with a golden yellow center. While bluets grow singly, they are usually found in beautiful clusters. The blooming lasts for several weeks.

Bluets occur throughout the eastern United States in deciduous woods, old fields, and roadsides but are noticeable only when they flower in the spring. They seem to grow best in well-drained acidic poor soil often with moss, but generally they want spring moisture and a little sun. It is a plant that would do well in rock gardens.

## Juneau Bird Report for April by Patty Rose

During April, migrating birds arrived in Juneau in significant numbers. Observers reported 130 species in eBird, compared with 90 species during March. The highlight of the month was the movement of **Mountain Bluebirds** through the area in mid-April. Following are April observations

that are rare or rarer in spring on the Juneau Checklist:

Rare duck observations included a **Eurasian Wigeon** at Fish Creek on April 25 (PS, MS) and one at the Boy Scout Camp beach on April 27 (PS). A **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** was first seen on the Audubon spring bird walk at Eagle Beach SRA on April 14 and continued through April 20 (PS, mobs.). This species, perhaps the same individual, was later seen at the Boy Scout Camp beach on April 27 (PS). Sightings of **Hooded Mergansers** included two females on Twin Lakes on April 2 (PS), a male on Twin Lakes on April 3 (GV), and a male at Petersen Creek on April 27 (PS).

A **Peregrine Falcon** was observed flying over the Mendenhall Wetlands near the Golf Course on April 22 (GV). On April 27, three **Sandhill Cranes** were seen from the Boy Scout Camp Trail (PS) and at Eagle Beach SRA (RG). The only observation of a **Eurasian Collared-Dove** reported during April was of a single individual near Auke Bay on April 25 (MS). A **Cliff Swallow** was seen with a group of swallows on the Mendenhall Wetlands near the Golf Course on April 22 (PS, BA, PR).

**Mountain Bluebirds** were reported at Eagle Beach SRA, Point Bridget State Park, and the Mendenhall Wetlands. The first sighting was of a male at Eagle Beach SRA during the April 14 Audubon spring bird walk (PS, mobs.). Subsequent observations at that same location included a female on April 15 (DJ Photo) and a male on April 16 (MS Photo). A male was seen at Point Bridget State Park on April 20 (PS). Mountain Bluebird observations at the Mendenhall Wetlands near the Golf Course included a male on April 21 (PR) and April 22 (PS, BA, PR), a male and female on April 22 (GV), and one male and three females on April 23 (MS).

A **Townsend's Solitaire** was located in the muskeg near the power plant at the end of the North Douglas Powerline Trail on April 17 (PS), and one was seen at Point Bridget State Park on the beach near Cowee Creek on April 20 (PS).

These observations were compiled primarily from eBird and Eaglechat. Thanks to those who contributed. Contributors included Bev Agler (BA), Ron Gile (RG), Doug Jones (DJ), Patty Rose (PR), Mark Schwan (MS), Paul Suchanek (PS), and Gus Van Vliet (GV).



*Mountain Bluebird photo by Mark Schwan.*

### **Wrangell – May 2012, Bonnie Demerjian**

Wrangell celebrated the Stikine River Birding Festival during the last weekend of the month. The traditional bird walk with 20 birders of all ages on Muskeg Meadows Golf Course netted 27 species. Notable finds included a Northern goshawk and a small flock of American pipits. More hikes are planned for this spring. The Juneau Raptor Center brought Phil, a Gyrfalcon and Nugget, a barn owl, to a day of school programs and an evening event. Students also created bird-inspired art with guest

artist Sandy Shepard of Ketchikan. Master gardener Sue Goetz from Seattle presented a workshop on gardening to attract birds and KSTK radio listeners were challenged to “Name that Tweet”.

This year’s Sandhill crane show began April 19 with a few stragglers crossing overhead through the 25<sup>th</sup>. The birds spent some time on the Stikine River flats before continuing north. Snow geese were doing the same and began to be seen around mid-April. A lone Snow goose spent an afternoon in the yard of a local church, possibly resting. Its rusty head attracted plenty of attention and probably resulted from mucking about in mineral-rich mud in the Skagit or Fraser rivers before heading north, ultimately to Russia’s Wrangel Island. Western grebes are commonly seen in the area in spring and fall. This year is no exception with a small flock observed near the Wrangell airport at month’s end. Trumpeter swans again made an appearance at Pat’s Lake early in the month and a pair of Hooded mergansers was spotted there on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Observers living on the Stikine River report nesting Great-horned owls near their cabins. One observer even had an owl perched on his porch listening for voles in the grass. A handful of Red-winged blackbirds are present near river cabins. Unlike in Wrangell, where they appear for a few weeks in early spring, some of these birds remain all summer and a few even winter over. The eulachon run on the river is finished so the several thousand Bald eagles that appear for that feast have moved on.



Several hundred Black turnstones mixed with Surfbirds and a smattering of Western sandpipers foraged along Zimovia Strait beaches during the last half of the month.

The first Ruby-crowned kinglet was recorded on April 7. Pine siskins, which have been absent all winter, have reappeared this month. Golden-crowned sparrows, ravenous as ever, appeared around mid-month, preceded by Rufous hummingbirds which arrived the second week of the month. Savannah sparrows appeared around the 25<sup>th</sup>. Fox sparrows in greater numbers than usual have been in town since mid-month and a few Lincoln sparrows are also here.

Warblers also began to arrive during the last week of April. An early Yellow-rumped warbler was spotted at Pat's Lake on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the first Townsend's on the 24<sup>th</sup> and the first Orange-crowned was reported on the 25<sup>th</sup> although none are here in great numbers yet.

The first Violet-green swallow was reported on April 22.

On April 25 a Black-headed grosbeak was observed at a feeder in town.

A feeder watcher reports that eight Band-tailed pigeons are frequenting his feeder and have been around since the middle of April.



This red-headed Snow goose spent an afternoon on a Wrangell lawn on April 16, perhaps resting from its long journey. Photo by Carol Ross.

#### Eagle Feather Collectors

If you already have a permit to collect feathers, and you have some, remember to contact Brenda at 321-4739 or [membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:membership@juneau-audubon-society.org) so that we can send them to the National Eagle Repository in Colorado. If you do not yet have a permit, but are willing to collect eagle feathers for this purpose, just call or send an e-mail to get your official collection permit.

Thanks!

## OTHER WEB OPPORTUNITIES

\*\*\*\*New Bob Armstrong's wonderful bird and other wildlife photographs that are free to use for educational and conservation purposes – [www.naturebob.com](http://www.naturebob.com)

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### *SUMMARY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRD OBSERVATIONS SEASONALLY*

Sub-regional Compilers: Steven C. Heinl, 2603 4th Avenue, Ketchikan, AK 99901

Andrew W. Piston, P. O. Box 1116, Ward Cove, AK 99928

This publication has wonderful bird photos and information. If you want to be put on Steve Heinl's mailing list to receive this summary and to contribute observations, you can contact him at: [steve.heinl@alaska.gov](mailto:steve.heinl@alaska.gov)

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If you are interested in additional information, subscribe to North American Birds, here is a link to see more information: <http://www.aba.org/nab> < <http://www.aba.org/nab> > . The seasonal reports cover all of North America and give excellent overviews of unusual numbers of particular species (high or low), early or late dates of occurrence, changes in status, and rare finds for each region.

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There is also an extensive list of all bird sightings entered in eBird ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) < <http://www.ebird.org/> > )

**Check out our web page for more information: [www.juneau-audubon-society.org](http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org)**

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

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Yakutat Tern Festival

May 31-June 3, 2012

*“Celebrating Birds in Culture”*

Kid's Activities

Cultural Events

Art



Seminars

Field-Trips

Banquet

Please join us to celebrate the extraordinary natural and cultural resources of Yakutat, Alaska!

[www.yakutatternfestival.org](http://www.yakutatternfestival.org)

Special airfare from Alaska Airlines from May 28-June 6: \$89.00/one way from Juneau and \$109/one way from Anchorage! Book online at [www.alaskaair.com](http://www.alaskaair.com)

For more information please call the U.S. Forest Service at (907) 784-3359

**Enjoy your birding! Especially the spring Migration**

### **Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival May 3-6, 2012**

The **22<sup>nd</sup>** Annual Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival, May 3-6, 2012, will continue to include environmental education as well as showing our visitors the beauty and grandeur of Prince William Sound and the Copper River Delta. Our Keynote Speaker this year is Mr. Guido Berguido from the Panama Audubon Society. Other Audubon speakers include Nils Warnock and Melanie Smith from the Alaska Audubon Society.

Cooperation and collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Forest Service-Cordova Ranger District, the Prince William Sound Science Center and many of our local service oriented businesses help insure the Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival is successful year after year.

## 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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\_\_\_ My check for \$ \_\_\_ is enclosed \_\_\_ Please bill me C2ZA510Z A51

## Local Audubon Society Membership Application

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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 newsletter *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 request this option email: [membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:membership@juneau-audubon-society.org)**

