

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 2014

Juneau Audubon Society

**MARCH MEETING: THURSDAY, MARCH 13,
THUNDER MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY AT 7:00 p.m.**

African Trip: South Africa and Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

A once in a lifetime trip discovering the wildlife and birds of Africa and appreciating a land we are dangerously close to losing. Presented by Matt Knutson and Rosary Lombardo



President's notes by Brenda Wright

Berners Bay Cruises 2014

Save the Dates: April 26 and May 3 for our annual wildlife spectacular cruises to Berners Bay. Come join the fun with expert birders and see what awaits us just around the corner! Tickets go on sale by mid March at Heritage Book stores.

Eagle Feathers:

Remember that permit that you put in your pack so that you could pick up eagle feathers to be donated to the National Eagle Repository? If you have some feathers, please turn them into Brenda -call 321-4739 or email president@juneau-audubon-society.org If you would like a permit, you can get one at the public meeting or send an e-mail.

Bird Migration Festivals in Alaska:

Stikine River Birding Festival, April 24-26, 2014

<http://www.wrangell.com/birdingfestival/stikine-river-birding-festival-april-24-26-2014>

Homer Kachemak bay shorebird festival 2014 May 8-11

<http://www.homeralaska.org/visit-homer/events-homer/kachemak-bay-shorebird-festival>

Cordova Coper River Delta Shorebird Festival May 8-11, 2014

<http://cordovachamber.com/community/festivals-and-events/shorebird-festival/>

Yakutat the 4th Annual Yakutat Tern Festival June 5-8 2014. The festival is a celebration of the natural and cultural resources of Yakutat, Alaska. Yakutat hosts one of the largest and southern most known nesting colonies of Aleutian Terns, as well Arctic Terns and up to 200 other bird species that nest or migrate through the area. The festival is family friendly and offers activities for birders as well as non-birders, including field trips, seminars, kid's activities, evening banquets and other programs, bird banding demonstration, and an art show. Please see www.yakutatternfestival.org

visit us on Facebook, or call (907) 784-3359 for more information.

Bird Studies Canada:

February 2014 – Owls are popular birds, and relatively easy to identify. But because they're largely nocturnal and nest very early in the season, they can be difficult to monitor. These important predators are directly impacted by changes in Canadian forests, and owl population studies are essential for conservation. Through a national **Nocturnal Owl Survey** network, more than 1000 volunteers across Canada spend an evening counting owls along isolated roads. Their observations help document population trends of nesting owls, and the limits of their breeding ranges. We are lucky in SE Alaska to have a study done here too: DISTRIBUTION,

ABUNDANCE, AND ECOLOGY OF FOREST OWLS IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA Final Report April 2009 by Michelle L. Kissling and Stephen B. Lewis If you want to see the paper go to http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/fieldoffice/juneau/pdf/07-ForestOwls-1_Kissling&Lewis_FinalReport.pdf

American Bird Conservancy

The Cats Indoors program invites YOU to check out our **COMPLETELY REDESIGNED** <http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/index.html>

The site now proudly displays quick links to important information such as our brochures; fact sheets, scientific literature, and other resources. Stay tuned for future updates.

Great Back Yard Bird Count for Juneau, February 2014

50 Species Total and 46 Checklists- this table is arranged in order of the species seen for each day of the count. Gus Van Vliet saw 38 species! Patty Rose had 26 and Amy Courtney Clark had 24. Sure hope everyone had as much fun as I did.

SPECIES NAME	SPECIES NAME	SPECIES NAME
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Black Scoter	Greater Scaup
loon sp.	Long-tailed Duck	Barrow's Goldeneye
crossbill sp.	Red-necked Grebe	Common Merganser
Northern Shrike	Western Grebe	American Dipper
Willow Ptarmigan	Pelagic Cormorant	Common/Barrow's Goldeneye
Common Loon	Pigeon Guillemot	Bald Eagle
Hairy Woodpecker	White-throated Sparrow	Northwestern Crow
Steller's Jay	Varied Thrush	Marbled Murrelet
Rough-legged Hawk	Great Blue Heron	Anna's Hummingbird
Common Murre	Harlequin Duck	Belted Kingfisher
Killdeer	White-winged Scoter	Common Raven
gull sp.	Mew Gull	Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Surf Scoter	Thayer's Gull	European Starling
Pacific Loon	Glaucous-winged Gull	Song Sparrow
Horned Grebe	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Dark-eyed Junco
Black-billed Magpie	Mallard	Red Crossbill
Lesser Scaup	Bufflehead	Rock Pigeon
Red-breasted Merganser	Common Goldeneye	Pine Siskin

Juneau Audubon Society Honors 2014 Science Fair Winners

The Regional Science Fair was held in Juneau on March 1, 2014. It included students from Juneau high schools, Angoon, Skagway, and Raven Correspondence school.

Students receiving \$100 awards were Lena Kawakami for “How Does the Feed Put in a Feeder Affect Winterbird Feeding?” and Abby Watts for “How human-related activities affect the amount of birds in the area”. Our winners for the Berners Bay cruises tickets were Georgia Robinson for “How Soil Composition from Landslides affects initial seedling regeneration of Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and red alder (*Alnus rubra*)” and Katherine Kane and Helen Thurston for “How water quality affects the mortality rate of Stoneflies (*Plecoptera*)”.

Be Part of the Movement: Give Cash Make Change.

Pick.Click.Give. <http://www.pickclickgive.org/>

PATRICIA WHERRY’S CLASS -- WHAT IS THAT BIRD?

BEGINNING BIRDERS is an interesting and fun, hands-on set of classes. They are targeted to beginners – adults and older teens - interested in birds.

The class, a set of four 1.5 hour Thursday evening meetings, is offered by Juneau Audubon through Community Schools. A Town set of classes has just finished. A Valley set will begin Thursday Feb 27. If you miss the first class, you can join in for the other parts March 6, 13, & 27.

VALLEY CLASS

Dates and time: **Thursdays at 6:30-8pm Feb 27, March 6, 13, and 27.**

Location: **Riverbend Elementary** (up Riverside Drive from the valley post office) in the library
Information covered will be:

- 1) What makes a bird a bird. Transform yourself into feeling like and appreciating the uniqueness of being a bird.
- 2) As birding newbies, we will look at what bird guides have to offer as an identification tool.
- 3) Helpful identification clues will be shared
- 4) You'll get a glimpse into bird families
- 5) The bird examples used are those birds currently in Juneau right. Or they will soon be moving



through to interior & northern breeding grounds, as well as arriving to breed locally.
6) Juneau Audubon has binoculars for folks to experience using in an indoor virtual bird-a-thon.

7) After completion of the set of classes, Juneau Audubon will host you on a birdwalk.
More further information contact: Patricia Wherry, 209-3374, education@juneau-audubon-society.org

Cellphone Towers In Juneau By Josh Peters

Cellphones have become so common place within our world now that rarely do we think about the infrastructure that is expanding at an astounding rate. Cellphone and television/radio towers contribute to somewhere between 5,000,000 to 50,000,000 bird deaths per year in the United States and Canada. Here in Southeast Alaska, there is a push to build new towers to keep up with the amount of data that is going across the ever growing network. Not only are these towers unsightly, but they contribute to the deaths of migratory birds. There is not enough data to show exactly what the definitive mortality rate is on migratory birds here in Alaska. But we do know that they are often attracted to the lights on these structures that are there to alert aircraft, as well as collisions that occur when they fly lower because of wind conditions. If we aren't careful and do not take the proper precautions, cellphones may be the only thing left tweeting in our neck of the woods. You can find more information about what is going on in Juneau at <http://www.juneau.org/cddftp/projects/WirelessPlan/>

Juneau's February Bird Observations By Amy Courtney

We have not had many new rare birds this month, but a number of our rare birds from past months have remained through February for our viewing pleasure.

Gadwalls have continued in smaller numbers this month, but birders have mostly only seen them at Sheep Creek Delta, plus a couple spotted at the North Douglas trailer park. Patty Rose found a **Lesser Scaup** in front of DIPAC hatchery on 2/15. Auke Bay seems to be a favorite **Black Scoter** haunt this month, with two reported on the 8th, four on the 9th, and two again on the 15th, (GV). In North Douglas, near False Outer Point, a male **Common X Barrow's Goldeneye** hybrid



was seen and photographed on 2/21, (AC). Some suspect this could be the same hybrid Goldeneye reported at this location a few years ago. Three **Hooded Mergansers** were spotted from the Dike Trail on 2/09 (LL), two were seen in the Mendenhall River from the Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei Trail on 2/24 (DP), and one on the Dike Trail again on 2/27 (LL).

Rarely spotted in the winter, two observers counted four **Willow Ptarmigan** on Eaglecrest on the 16th, for the Great Backyard Bird Count (DR, KT). On 2/7,

Gus van Vliet reported a bizarre finding. A male **Sooty Grouse** had flown full-speed into an office building downtown and died. Gus noted that it was the only eBird record in Juneau for a Sooty Grouse between the months of November and February.

This month's only report of a **Yellow-billed Loon** came from Mark Schwan at Picnic Cove, North Douglas, on 2/01. On 2/15, Gus van Vliet spotted a **Western Grebe** on Auke Bay; the first sighting since early January.

Our one falcon sighting of the month came from Marsha Squires, who had a nice Valentine's Day visit from a **Peregrine Falcon** over Twin Lakes. A female **Rough-legged Hawk** has been present on the wetlands near Temsco Helicopters all month long (M. Obs.). She appears to be overwintering! Also near Temsco, a lone **Eurasian Collared-dove** was spotted calling strongly on a powerline on 2/17 (GV). This is the first EUCD record for Juneau since the first week of December.

Perhaps a very early spring migrant, or simply an overlooked straggler from last year, a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was seen from a pullout near Sunshine Cove on 2/23 (AC). On 2/9, Laurie Lamm was fortunate enough to spot a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at Auke Rec; Gus van Vliet also saw it that day, but there have been no reports since then. On 2/01 on River Road, a **Pine Grosbeak** was seen and heard vocalizing from the top of a tall spruce (DR). A lone **Snow Bunting** was spotted flying over the Mendenhall Wetlands on 2/01 (GV). Gus van Vliet also reported that a **White-throated Sparrow** has continued to frequent his yard in Fritz Cove this month. A flock of at least six **Red-winged Blackbirds** in a Lemon Creek neighborhood has also continued through this month, though their furtive behavior has made counting them very difficult at times (PR, GV).

Our various **Anna's Hummingbirds** around town are persevering admirably. Patty Rose still has an immature male and an adult male at her feeder in Douglas, Karla Hart has an immature bird at her feeder on Back Loop, and Gus van Vliet has an immature male in Fritz Cove. One day Gus reported that an adult male appeared (perhaps the same one Patty has had?) with his immature and even sang briefly! Apparently someone thinks it should be springtime already, and I for one am all too eager to believe him. Thanks to the following observers who reported their sightings to eBird and Eaglechat this month: Karla Hart (KH), Amy Courtney (AC), Laurie Lamm (LL), David Pereksta (DP), Patty Rose (PR), Deb Rudis (DR), Mark Schwan (MS), Marsha Squires (MSQ), Kim Titus (KT), Gus van Vliet (GV).

Ketchikan January–February Bird Report By Andy Piston

Birding at Ketchikan slowed, as usual, as we entered the last stretch of winter. There have been very few lingering sparrows (other than **Song Sparrow**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, and a few **Fox Sparrows**), a near complete absence of **Steller's Jays**, and almost no **Pine Siskins** or other finches coming to feeders in February. Waterbird numbers have been variable at most locations depending on the availability of feed—a count of 2,850 **Marbled Murrelets** in Clover Passage on 5 January was one of the more notable concentrations this winter. **Eurasian Collared-Dove** numbers remained relatively high this winter and numerous flocks of 5-20 birds remained through February. Late in February a few Pacific Wrens started to sing sporadically and many of the wintering ducks are actively displaying and getting into the breeding spirit. No birds were more in the breeding spirit than the pair of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** that was observed copulating in my yard on 22 February—a location where nesting has occurred the last few years.

Highlights from this January and February at Ketchikan include another good showing of **Anna's Hummingbirds**; at least five birds and likely more have made it through the worst of winter. One or two **White-throated Sparrows** were seen sporadically at north end feeders in January and February. Several **American Coots** have been found this winter, including two that have been regular at Knudsen Cove Marina since at least mid-January. The most exciting find this winter was a **Western Meadowlark** that was found at North Point Higgins School by Andy Piston and Steve Heint on 5 January and is still present as of late February (Figure 1). This species breeds north to central and northeastern British Columbia and is casual in Southeast Alaska. This was the 10th local record and several have been found at this same location in prior years. The area around North Point Higgins School has some of the most extensive open grassy habitat this species prefers on the Ketchikan road system and probably draws in any lost bird that may find itself north of town. Most Ketchikan birders are now anxiously awaiting the first spring migrants to arrive—robins could start showing up any day, gulls and some waterfowl species (particularly **Surf Scoters**) will start increasing soon, and **Fox Sparrows** will start pouring through towards late March.



Western Meadowlark at North Point Higgins School, Ketchikan, 19 January 2014 (photo by Steve Heint).

Wrangell Report – March 2014 Raven Newsletter by Bonnie Demerjian

I've been resisting being labeled a snowbird, but after six years of heading to the Southwest in February, it now seems inevitable. So, here are some observations from a few state and county park campgrounds in southern Arizona.

It's too early for any migrants so the birds here now are the residents. They include large numbers of **White-crowned Sparrows**, **Raspy Cactus Wrens** are common around the campsites as are mourning doves, **Curve-billed Thrashers**, **Mockingbirds**, **Gila Woodpeckers**, and a few **Northern Flickers**. While hiking higher, **Black-throated Sparrows**, **Rock Wrens**,

and **Canyons Wrens** with their distinctive descending swoop of song are scattered among the boulders. Sociable **Harris' Hawks** perch in family groups. I heard a story of a family of seven that gathered one day on a backyard picnic table, but they are more often seen cruising the sky on a hot afternoon. I scattered birdseed around our RV and that brought **Mourning Doves**, **Thrashers** and, surprisingly, several **Rosy-faced Lovebirds** in to feed. These birds, native to arid southwestern Africa, are escaped cage birds which have become common in certain areas around Phoenix. **Gambel's Quail** are everywhere, calling in low tones to each other as they scurry from one sheltered palo verde to another. **Phainopepla** are another common sight in the low desert, the males in glossy black and the females in Quaker gray. And last, Anna's hummingbirds are buzzing and sipping from chuparosa blooms even in the midst of winter.

Water, of course, is the big draw for birds and one outstanding spot near Phoenix for viewing a broad array of species is the Riparian Preserve at Gilbert Water Ranch. This is a water reclamation project consisting of seven ponds each with different plant biomes laced with trails and is home to over 200 species of birds. This is one of my favorite places to bird in this area and even on this year's brief mid-afternoon visit saw **American Avocets**, **Long-billed Dowitchers**, **Great and Snowy Egrets**, **Black-necked Stilts**, and some round-eyed **Black-crowned Night Herons** skulking pond side in the brush.

Southeast Arizona is well known for its birding hotspots in spring, but even in winter provides a wealth of rewarding birding experiences for Alaska's winter migrants. The recent hot weather, however, has brought snakes from their dens this week so from now on I'll be keeping one eye on the sky and another at my feet.

Birdfeeder Foes By Prill (Isleib) Mollick, Smoky Mountains, N.C.

Each year a few big fat gray squirrels get on the birdfeeders. We'd usually open a door and clap loudly to shoo them away. My husband hung birdfeeders up on a wire. A few squirrels feeding on the ground are fine. But this fall they climbed out on the wire doing a tight-rope act. When I wiggled the wire, hoping to discourage them from being there, they were quite the sight wobbling back and forth as they scurried back to the tree.

Last year a sharp shinned hawk came in the yard. It quickly flew at the birdfeeder, snatched a gold finch right off the feeder and flew away with it. That was not the kind of birdfeeder I had in mind.

Smoky Mountain birders are cautioned about putting up birdfeeders too early because of bear activity. Black bear were still active in early November, especially about 10 miles from town and up in higher elevations. At our location we don't have bear but we have gray squirrels and raccoons. Raccoons go after the peanut-butter-suet block so we have to bring it in at night or they carry it off.

I've noticed a gray squirrel drinking out of the bird bath. One day, I observed one hanging upside-down. Hind feet clasp the wire, front feet clutching the feeder, as it was feeding from the birdfeeder. Another day I discovered a squirrel in the same position chewing up a different plastic feeder. It chewed the feeder in half. Seed scattered on the ground. I bought a large wire "squirrel proof" feeder. Squirrels still climbed on it trying to get the sunflower seed. There were at least a dozen in the yard at any one time. The birds couldn't feed with so much squirrel interference.

Time for a change. We borrowed a neighbors "Have-a-Heart" trap. Over winter we caught 38 gray squirrels. One day two squirrels were in the trap together. They angrily wrestled or fought. They squeaked, growled, and "said things" in squirrel language that should never be translated. All caught squirrels were taken for an all expense paid trip over the river, across the highway, to a forested area several miles away, and were bid a fond farewell. The neighbors "Have-a-Heart" trap was returned. Occasionally a squirrel comes in the yard without bothering feeders. Birds can now feed without interference.

Eurasian Collared Dove – Many times the immigrant By Patricia Wherry
education@juneau_audubon_society.org

Plump of body with a small head and a long tail, the Eurasian Collared Dove originated in the greater India area. In the 16th Century it wandered to Turkey and the Balkans. Increased agriculture and the cultivation of grains in the 1900s saw a rapid spread of these doves through Europe and Asia. In 1970s, a burglary of a Bahaman pet shop caused the loss of some doves. The shop owner released the rest. By the early 1980s Florida had Eurasian Collared doves feeding in their small communities and at any grain elevators. California noted the birds in 1992. For a number of years, southeast Alaska has observed them. The birders at this year's Yakutat Tern Festival observed these doves.

Morning and evening light gives the buff colored birds a pink tint with a nice dark collar on the nape (back) of the neck. In flight and when perched, the wingtips are darker than the rest of the wing. The fanned tail has a white terminal band above and a two



photo: Doug Jones

toned band below. Their perch profile is horizontal including the squared tail. The male's call is an insistent *koo-KOO-kook* from a high perch. I heard this bird in Yakutat and thought it was an owl. In the daytime? Nope. The chicks for 5 to 10 days get their protein and fat from "crop milk." This whitish fluid is the liquid filled cells that line the adult bird's crop and a part of the esophagus. Later, the parents switch to regurgitating seeds, insects, and berries.

Most birds have to scoop up water, tip back their heads and let the water run down their throats. The Eurasian Collared Dove is able to put its bill to the water and suck up the water.

Starlings and House Sparrows are immigrants to North America which have negatively impacted native birds. It remains to be seen what impact the Eurasian Collared Dove will have. Seedy garden? They may winter near you.

[2014 Great American Arctic Birding Challenge](#)

[March 1 - June 1, 2014](#)

Birds from six continents rely on America's Arctic in Alaska for nesting, breeding, staging, and molting; their ranges reach across the Lower 48 states and beyond. Birdwatchers from around the United States can test their skills in the Great American Arctic Birding Challenge this spring to find the most birds in their state from the contest checklist of Arctic birds. The contest runs from March 1 through June 1 so that teams of birders all over the U.S. can spot birds as they migrate. Find a warbler expert, your friend with the top-of-the-line scope, or someone with supersonic hearing to identify those sparrow calls...or head out with your regular birding buddies. Each team can have up to six members. [Get the checklist and contest rules.](#)

Contact Audubon Alaska's Beth Peluso by [email](#) or call 907-276-7034 if you have questions. Let the games begin!



Bird Tidbit By Amy Sherwin

Bringing to mind dreams of sandy beaches and open seas Richard Bach says that "seagulls are an unlimited idea of freedom." The name "gull" actually comes from the medieval Cornish *gullan* (or *gwylan*) which means "throat, stemming from the Celtic word *wylo*, or "wail." Until the 15th century, gulls were often called "mews" because of their distinct cry. By Shakespeare's time a "gull" also came to refer to a gullible person, someone who would swallow anything and gulls are often known to eat anything, even one another's stray chicks. Despite this, gulls are among the world's most successful birds living life on the wing by adapting to different conditions. Although there are no actual birds called "seagulls," when people think of gulls, they often dream of toe-loving sandy beaches, lulling waves, and the idea of being just as free as "seagulls."

WEB OPPORTUNITIES

*** Bob Armstrong's wonderful bird and other wildlife photographs that are free to use for educational and conservation purposes – www.naturebob.com



SUMMARY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRD OBSERVATIONS SEASONALLY

Sub-regional Compilers: Steven C. Heintz, 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 Heintz's mailing list to receive this summary and to contribute observations, you can contact him at: steve.heintz@alaska.gov

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.

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

PICK, CLICK, GIVE

As you fill out your application for the Alaska Permanent Fund, please consider making a donation to Juneau Audubon Society. The funds we receive help to pay for all our free events all year. Thanks for your help.

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Opting out of extra mailings will not stop magazine subscription.

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*. \$35 Basic renewal___

Name _____

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___ My check for \$ ___ is enclosed ___ Please bill me C3ZA510Z A51

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 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

