



The Raven newsletter from Juneau Audubon Society
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Edited by Lauren Cusimano



JAS Membership Potluck at Sandy Beach. Photo: Picnic Attendee

On a Successful JAS Member Picnic and Retreat By Deborah Hart

On Friday, August 26, JAS held a member's picnic at the log cabin shelter at Sandy Beach. We were joined by more than 25 members and many JAS board members. The intent of the picnic was to meet with members to learn what they enjoy about JAS's efforts as well as celebrate the opportunity to gather in person and reflect back on all the amazing work the JAS has accomplished these past years under the additional challenges of COVID.

We were also able to use this opportunity to recognize both past and current board members and active volunteers. Those recognized for their longstanding contributions to JAS included George Utermohle, 1

JAS Member Picnic and Retreat Cont.

Brenda Wright, Jeff Sauer, and Patty Rose. Keep a lookout for an article in *Juneau Empire* to celebrate their efforts on a broader scale with the community, including details on their specific contributions.

Following the picnic, the JAS Board of Directors met on Saturday, August 27, at the Eaglecrest Ski Area for a day-long visioning retreat facilitated by the fantastic Timi Tullis. Our JAS Board President, Marsha Squires, provided strong constructive leadership in developing the agenda and encouraging all JAS Board of Directors to share and contribute ideas on how to strengthen the society in the coming years.

We discussed input from members at both the picnic and through an online members survey (which you may still take at bit.ly/jas-survey-2022). We received excellent feedback and appreciation for the activities and events JAS provides, including our wildly popular bird walks, our educational and birding classes, our seasonal programs, our informational newsletter *The Raven*, and our informational presentations (which will begin again on October 13 and run every second Thursday through April 2023). We also received feedback opportunities for improvement, including how better to communicate with our membership, ideas for strengthening partnerships with other organizations, and elevating our ability to inform our membership on topics of interest concerning conservation.

We left the retreat with three focal goals — improve JAS' organizational components (updating our bylaws, creating operational procedures, defining Board of Directors' roles and responsibilities), modernize and improve JAS communications, and build and diversity our membership through outreach and engagement activities (like a birding field trip leading workshop to build our volunteer group).

We look forward to putting these goals into action!



Brenda, Jeff, and Patty (George not pictured). Photo: Lauren Cusimano

Membership Picnic 2022 Volunteer Recognitions By Marsha Squires

GEORGE UTERMOHLE

George Utermohle is the ultimate behind-the-scenes kind of guy and has been with our organization for decades. George has been a volunteer, board member, President, and Treasurer, and in 2005 became our dedicated “rock” of a webmaster — and hasn't stopped. He uploads reports, posts events, shares valuable reports and documents of regional and statewide interests, archives our records, provides public information, and has assured that the Mission and goals are front and center for the public. He doesn't say much or ask much — he doesn't even want to go for coffee! But he is always there for our organization. George is the mystery man behind the web, and the Chapter wants to take the opportunity to thank him for his long-standing commitment to the JAS. You are appreciated, George, more than you know.

BRENDA WRIGHT

Brenda is known for being tremendously kind and genuine to the core. She is dedicated to educating *all of us* about birds, science,



A special board member in her natural habitat. Photo: Courtesy Brenda Wright

Volunteer Recognitions Cont.

conservation, science, and habitats. She has spent decades working and volunteering in the science and conservation realm. She has also been involved with Audubon for over two decades and has held every position on the Board of Directors. Most recently she pulled us through COVID offering educational programs from October through April via Zoom. Not an easy feat!

For the past seven years, she has dedicated much of her spring to the Alaska Tree Swallow Project, which Audubon became a part of in 2015. Brenda has worked with Boy Scouts troops to have nesting boxes built and has networked with various people to obtain nesting locations and create partnerships. She has led countless field trips, hosted the annual Berners Bay cruises, made jams and coordinated our efforts at the Public Market, written articles, spoke with reporters, and posted flyers everywhere.

She is the first to volunteer for radio spots on KTOO and enjoys volunteering for our youth educational programs. Brenda has also worked directly with our Audubon intern and has been an incredible role model and teacher. She has done all these things and more —

all while representing JAS with a tad of humor, a smile, and class.

JEFF SAUER

Jeff Sauer has been a long-time conservationist and birder in the Juneau community. He too has a history with JAS going back two decades. He served on the JAS Board for 10 years filling the roles of Vice President and President. During that time and beyond, he has shared his expertise and enthusiasm for birds, the environment, and the organization through board guidance and support, guided field trips, interesting and entertaining programs, citizen science projects, fundraising, and teaching.

Most recently he and his wife, Theresa, along with two other friends, presented an excellent account of their kayak and birding trip in northern Alaska — the most attended program in years! His sightings of the Wandering Tattlers are well known on eBird, and some of us are envious of his “backyard” birding situation out the road. Thank you Jeff for your constant support, friendly approach, and honest love for birds and our environment.

PATTY ROSE

Patty is a humble, dedicated birder. One might even say she’s “hardcore”. I believe she’s a great example of passion and curiosity. Her interest in birding began roughly 20 years ago, and at that time, she got involved with our local Audubon chapter as a volunteer. In 2006, she jumped onto the Board in the Secretary position, and in 2010 moved to the Treasurer’s Chair until 2021.

Her contributions to the local birding community have been extensive. When you look at eBird, it is more than likely that you will see Patty’s name along with an extensive list of birds found for the day. Patty has sighted 256 species in Juneau and has submitted over 2,300 eBird lists to Cornell. She also has the knack and patience to find those rare birds and is kind enough to take the time to share them with others. Personally, I consider Patty to be one of my “birding gurus” and am always pleased when I get the chance to



Patty Rose leaving the picnic with a prize basket. Photo: Lauren Cusimano



Some current JAS board members. Photo: Lauren Cusimano

Volunteer Recognitions Cont.

walk a trail and spend time with her.

She has been diligent in citizen science and has participated in and contributed to the Global Big Days, bird-a-thons, and Backyard Birding events. And her leadership with the Christmas Bird Count has been impeccable and greatly appreciated. Patty has also filled the shoes of field trip leader many times, written articles for the newsletter, participated in numerous Audubon events and provided solid and helpful advice to the Board.

I miss working with you, Patty but I know that relinquishing your post with Audubon has created more time for you to bird and nobody wants to get in your way of finding that usual or rare bird! Thank you for all you have done for birding, our community, and JAS.

FOR ALL

I'm sure I've missed projects and tasks many of you have taken part in over the years. Please pardon me, but what I most want to impart is that JAS has genuine gold nuggets in you as volunteers. You are a treasure and we are thankful for your dedication and involvement.

JAS Annual Meeting and Election

7 p.m. on Thursday, October 13, at UAS (room TBD)

Each fall, per the JAS bylaws, the general membership meets to elect the officers for the JAS Board of Directors. The following are Officer positions, but general membership will be encouraged at the meeting to put forth additional nominations and make selections.

Current JAS Officers:

President — Marsha Squires

Vice President — Deborah Hart

Treasurer — Betsy Fischer

Secretary — Amy Sherwin

Current JAS Board of Directors:

Education — Kim Ramos

Field Trips — Doreen Prieto

Membership — Lizzie Solger

Programs — Brenda Wright

Conservation — Vacant

Communications — Lauren Cusimano

At-Large — Gwen Baluss

At-Large — Winston Smith

JAS Annual Meeting and Election Cont.

Officer nominations for the JAS Board of Directors:

President — Marsha Squires

Vice President — Vacant

Treasurer — Betsy Fischer

Secretary — Amy Sherwin

Other JAS Board of Directors include:

Education — Kim Ramos

Field Trips — Doreen Prieto

Membership — Lizzie Solger

Programs — Vacant

Conservation — Winston Smith

Communications — Lauren Cusimano

At-Large — Gwen Baluss

At-Large — Brenda Wright



Pectoral Sandpiper. This species relies on mud flats in the Mendenhall Wetlands to eat and rest on its journey toward South America. Photo: Gwen Baluss

From the Field: October Big Day and More

By Doreen Prieto

Hurray! Fall is practically here! The Autumnal Equinox on September 22 will officially usher in autumn, and October Big Day will take place

on Saturday, October 8. From midnight to midnight in their local time zone, birders from around the world will be watching and compiling checklists of what birds they spot. By spending as few as 10 minutes from your living room window you will join thousands of birders taking part in this annual event.

I recommend getting an eBird account (if you don't have one already) and taking the free eBird Essentials course (academy.allaboutbirds.org/product/eBird-essentials). eBird is super easy, and it will open to you a whole new world of birding!

I also suggest you visit eBird.org/news/october-big-day-2022 for an excellent summary of this year's OBD and how you can participate. Here is a snippet of what to do on the big day:

- Enter what you see and hear on eBird (see instructions at bit.ly/entering-on-eBird) You can enter your sightings via our website or download the free eBird Mobile app to make submitting lists even easier. Please enter your checklists before 12 October to be included in our initial results announcement.
- Watch the sightings roll in. During the day, follow along with sightings from more than 190 countries in real-time on our October Big Day page (eBird.org/octoberbigday).

See you in the field!



Please Take the JAS Membership Survey!

Greetings, JAS members and readers of *The Raven*! We are looking for your feedback to help us incorporate our membership interests in future JAS activities.

Please take five minutes to complete the 2022 JAS Membership Survey. Visit bit.ly/jas-survey-2022.



Juneau Douglas North Crossing area. Photo: Lauren Cusimano

News on the North Crossing

By Winston Smith

On July 19, 2022, the JAS Board participated in a Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members Workshop as part of the Juneau Douglas North Crossing (“second crossing”) Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, which construction engineering firm DOWL is undertaking on behalf of the City and Borough of Juneau and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

A previous virtual introductory meeting was held in April during which background information, including a statement of purpose and need and details of the study area, were presented. Organizers of the July 19 workshop reviewed the draft statement of purpose and need via slide presentations. Workshop attendees were divided into multiple predetermined working groups to consider various alternatives that could potentially address needs and meet additional stated goals. Each working group shared alternatives with each rationale and justification for selection. Alternatives are being reviewed by DOWL and cooperating agencies for further discussion and consideration at a future Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members Workshop. (Note: Future outcomes may affect the Mendenhall Wetlands, a globally recognized Important Bird Area (see audubon.org/important-bird-areas/mendenhall-wetlands).

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Juneau Douglas North Crossing Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study is to identify a north crossing corridor that will reduce dependency on the existing North Douglas Highway, improve network connectivity, reduce travel time and emissions, provide redundant access, improve emergency response time, and provide infrastructure consistent with the City and Borough of Juneau's planning framework.

NEED

The successful solution should address the following needs:

- Add roadway capacity and utility infrastructure to support the development of growth areas envisioned on North and West Douglas Island.
- Provide redundancy and reduce travel times for public safety and emergency response in the event of traffic disruption on the North Douglas Highway, Douglas Island Bridge, or Egan Drive.
- Create a traffic network with connectivity to Egan Drive and Glacier Highway, including improved motorized and non-motorized access to North Douglas Island and reduces transportation barriers to land development and emergency response.

STATED GOALS

- Reduce overall vehicle miles traveled and thereby reduce emissions and improve the viability of electric vehicles.
- Improve the quality of life through reduced emissions, improved access, utility infrastructure, and economic development.
- Improve existing natural environmental conditions where possible and avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts to the natural environment.
- Improve access and connection to recreational, cultural, and subsistence resources.
- Enhance and protect public health and safety.
- Satisfy applicable federal, state, and local plans, policies, and regulations.



Group of birders in Mendenhall Glacier Forelands. Photo: Lauren Cusimano

Alaska's Bird Tourism Means Big Bucks

By Lauren Cusimano

There's been a lot of talk about Alaska bird tourism dollars lately. Why? We'll give you a key-points summary.

The recent hype was ignited by a study released in July by the journal PLUS ONE titled "Small sight—Big might: Economic impact of bird tourism shows opportunities for rural communities and biodiversity conservation." (Read at bit.ly/ak-bird-tourism-study.) It was co-authored by Tobias Schwoerer of the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Natalie Dawson — a name you might recognize as she was the executive director of Audubon Alaska and vice president of the National Audubon Society. It was reported on by *Alaska Beacon*, *Anchorage Daily News*, and *Chilkat Valley News*, among other outlets.

This study is a big deal as it proves Alaska's birdwatching visitors stay longer, spend significantly more money, and are more likely to visit areas outside of usual tourist destinations. The study, which is based on metrics from 2016, reads that "nearly 300,000 birdwatchers visited Alaska and spent \$378 million supporting approximately 4,000 jobs."

On another note, four in every five these birdwatchers in 2016 arrived not on a cruise ship, making them independent travelers, and more likely to reach (and spend money in) Alaska's more remote areas, in addition to communities with cruise ship docks.

This is all building up to the big, fun piece of reporting — "A total of 3,273 annual average statewide jobs are directly associated with the expenditures of bird tourism and an additional 1,100 jobs stem from businesses supporting and supplying goods and services to the bird tourism sector." This means that birding creates the same number of jobs (in fact, slightly more) as mining in Alaska, which totaled 3,111 annual average statewide jobs in 2020.

To give Southeast Alaska a little praise, the study found that, "Among Alaska's Bird Conservation Regions, the Rainforest region received the most birders and had the largest spending with \$184.2 million, almost half of the statewide total." Go us!

Now that we've done our homework, you have some, too. The study paired reporting from the Alaska Visitor Statistics Program with eBird data! From this, we can draw our own conclusion — keep using eBird! For birding events like the upcoming October Big Day, during JAS-hosted walks, or anytime you're just out birding in Juneau, keeping eBird fired up is generating important data for bird-friendly tourism and conservation in Southeast and beyond.



JOIN THE JAS BOARD

— A GREAT OPPORTUNITY!

We need help! If you would like to be nominated for a position on the JAS Board of Directors, please email your name and position of interest to president@juneau-audubon-society.org.



Brenda hailing up boxes from Mendenhall Peninsula. Photo: Lauren Cusimano

Tree Swallow Nest Box Project for 2022

By Brenda Wright

Do you remember our cold winter and spring this year? Our first Tree Swallow was seen on April 29 — a week later than average.

To summarize the season, Marsha Squires and family placed 10 boxes at Fish Creek on April 5. Juneau Boy Scout Troop No. 6 placed 41 nest boxes at Sunny Point (20) and Mendenhall peninsula (21) on April 16. And 11 boxes were installed at Twin Lakes and Kingfisher Pond in mid-April. Even though the spring was cold, the first Tree Swallow egg observed ranged between May 14 and 24.

In 2022, 53 nest boxes had nests with a total of 295 eggs. At least 250 eggs hatched and 230 fledged. This year there were two nests with eggs that did not hatch, and one box was stolen. The sites with the most bugs are always the most successful. All the boxes on the Mendenhall Wetlands had the best fledge rates. Our summer intern, Amalia Tamone, was a great resource to collect data and help compile information. We shared our summaries with the Alaska Swallow Monitoring Network and Cornell's Nestwatch.

In 2023, the plan is to repair our present boxes and possibly build some more. If anyone is interested in volunteering some time, please contact me at at-large_b@juneau-audubon-society.org.



Anti-collision retrofit on windows at the Egan Library. Photo: Courtesy UAS

How to Be Feather Friendly

By Amalia Tamone

I am a senior at the University of Alaska Southeast studying biology. I recently had the great pleasure of interning with the JAS from May through the middle of July. During this time, I learned about bird migration, techniques to monitor populations, and observed bird tagging first-hand. I also learned more about the kind of collaboration between scientists and the community that is integral to the conservation of the animals we love.

One example of this is the recent installation of bird deterrents on windows in the Egan Library at UAS. After reaching out to the Facilities Staff director, I met with him and other library staff to discuss areas where bird strikes were prevalent. They agreed to install Feather Friendly® window dots (deterrents that help to prevent birds from flying into windows) on seven windows on the second floor of the library where strikes were common. Enthusiastic about the idea of contributing to migratory bird conservation, UAS facilities have agreed to install the deterrents on more windows in the building. We are currently working toward installing them on two walls on the ground floor of the Egan Wing. This should greatly

Feather Friendly Cont.

reduce the number of strikes and deaths which occur there.

According to the American Bird Conservancy, window collisions kill at least 365 million birds a year. Feather Friendly window deterrents consist of tape with small white dots placed 2 inches by 2 inches apart. After peeling the tape off, only the white dots stick to the window. This serves to discourage birds from flying in while also preserving the view outside.

Other types of window deterrents exist, such as “Zen Blinds” which are strings that hang in front of the window. Simple solutions like this can save the lives of birds and ultimately help the conservation of the local bird populations. So far, JAS helped the U.S. Forest Service install Feather Friendly dots in several USFS public use cabins. I look forward to continuing work with UAS. I am incredibly appreciative of the support both UAS and JAS have shown in the project and am excited to see it come to fruition.

Programs Chair is Open!

By Brenda Wright

I have enjoyed finding great presentations for our public meetings but will be stepping down as Programs Chair for the JAS board.

Do you enjoy birding? Do you have friends and acquaintances that enjoy birding, too? If you can say yes to this question, then you are the one we need. It is so easy to find new and exciting travelers (birds and people) with excellent photos, too.

The duties are to find presenters for our public meetings that occur from October through April. You get to help promote the presentations on the radio, on community calendars, and on social media. You also help find a location for Juneau Audubon’s public meeting. The best reward is getting to enjoy all kinds of new birds, birding locations, and talented photographers.



Townsend's Warbler. This beautiful long-distance migrant is still plentiful in Southeast Alaska until late fall. They mostly feed in coniferous habitat and help reduce the numbers of Western black-headed budworm, a pest of hemlock trees that is browning local forests. Photo: Gwen Baluss

JAS membership — need to join or renew?

Joining or renewing membership with the National Audubon Society using an address in Southeast Alaska will include automatic JAS membership. Visit action.audubon.org/renew/membership to do so. Or for local-only JAS membership, print or copy and mail this section with a check for \$10 made to Juneau Audubon Society for annual dues. Members receive a one-year subscription to *The Raven*.

Name(s): _____

Mailing address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Date: _____

Amount enclosed: _____

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