



## Field Trips Begin!

Join us to welcome back spring and migratory birds. Check out the schedule below for spring and summer events.

All **bird walks** are free and open to the public. **Everyone is welcome.** Please bring binoculars, if possible, and layered clothing, rain gear, and drinking water. Please no pets.

The **Berners Bay boat cruises** *do* have a cost associated with them. This is our major fundraiser for the year. We thank you for your participation.

Berners tickets and event details link via Juneau Arts and Humanities:  
<https://jahc.na.ticketsearch.com/sales/salesevent/16684>

## Schedule

**Please check the JAS website or Facebook page for more details about the events, and updates.**

Date and Time	Activity and Location
<b>Saturday, April 20</b> 8 - 10 am	<b>Bird Walk - Mendenhall Western Wetlands</b> (park at the end of Industrial Blvd)
<b>Saturday, April 27</b> Departs 8:30 am - returns 12:30 pm	<b>Berners Bay Cruise</b> Wildlife tour, starts at Statter Harbor (Auke Bay)
<b>Saturday, April 27</b> 8 - 10 am	<b>Bird Walk - Airport Dike Trail</b> Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge
<b>Saturday, April 27</b> Time: TBA	<b>Sunny Point Beach Clean-up</b> In Partnership with Litter Free, Inc. (west end of Sunny Dr, access under Egan Dr from old Glacier Hwy)

<b>Saturday, May 4</b> 8 - 10 am	<b>Bird Walk - Eagle Beach Recreation Area</b> (picnic area, not the campground)
<b>Saturday, May 11</b> 8 am – 12 pm	<b>Bird Walk - Airport Dike Trail</b> Mendenhall State Wildlife Refuge (out to the meadows)
<b>Saturday, May 11</b> 7 -10 am (drop-in activities throughout the morning)	<b>World Migratory Bird Day Celebration</b> in partnership with the US Forest Service at Juneau Community Garden, Montana Creek Songbird banding demonstration and insect activities
<b>Sunday, May 12</b> 8:30am – 12:30	<b>Berners Bay Cruise</b> (leaves from Statter Harbor, Auke Bay)
<b>Saturday, May 18</b> 8 - 10 am	<b>Bird Walk - Eagle Beach Recreation Area</b> (picnic area, not the campground)
<b>Saturday, May 25</b> 8 - 10 am	<b>Bird Walk - Airport Dike Trail</b> Mendenhall State Wildlife Refuge
<b>Saturday, June 1</b> 8 – 10 am	<b>Bird Walk - Mendenhall Western Wetlands</b> (park at the end of Industrial Blvd)
<b>Saturday, June 8</b> 8 – 10 am	<b>Bird Walk - Dredge Lakes Trail</b> (park by Forest Service office - Back Loop Rd)



*Tremendous rafts of Surf Scoters can be expected in April in Berners Bay. G. Baluss photo.*

# Local Hummingbird Banding Contributes to Broadscale Analysis

Gwen Baluss

The Rufous Hummingbird has been identified by avian biologists as a priority for monitoring, research, and management throughout the Western US and Mexico. Significant declines in the species have been registered on the Breeding Bird Survey warranting their placement on the Audubon Alaska Watchlist.

Since 2013, I have banded hummingbirds at the Juneau Community Garden (Some years I also captured birds at the Jensen-Olson arboretum or the Shrine of St. Therese). Standardized trapping using two traps takes place about every 10 days between late April and late July, the typical hummingbird nesting season locally. Birds are fitted with a unique numbered lightweight aluminum band and safely released. Each year I hope to recapture some of the birds to help shine light on survivorship. Given earlier studies, I expected adults to return to the same areas every season, if they have lived through the winter.

Every year is a little different. Interpreting variability between years is a challenge. The true number of local birds as well as natural food availability (flowers and small invertebrates) will affect capture numbers, with possibly less birds visiting the feeder trap when natural food takes them elsewhere. Hummingbirds in Juneau have been observed “swarming” at food sources, where high numbers (>20) of adults may congregate one day, and yet be nearly absent from the same location on a different day. This is a breeding-season behavioral pattern that differs from songbirds, which tend to be distributed more evenly across suitable habitat with most individuals more closely tied to a specific territory. With a periodic banding scheme, it is possible to, just by chance, hit or miss those more active days at the feeder.

However, when two consecutive years of standardized banding yield low numbers, it may suggest a true dip in the local hummingbird population. Sadly, 2023 was the lowest year for captures so far.

It's not wise to assume too much from one banding station, but the species decline statistically shown in broadscale studies may in fact be reflected in this local population.

Recently Juneau banding data was included with a network of stations in British Columbia, along with Breeding Bird Survey data near monitoring stations, for a demographic analysis. The authors found that Rufous Hummingbird declines are

mainly driven by juvenile survival and recruitment, and that human population density negatively impacts hummingbird survival.

The authors also made recommendations for increasing hummingbird survival in and around settled areas:

- Addressing direct habitat loss
- Preventing collisions with windows and other structures which are a particular threat to hummingbirds, by ensuring vertical structures are visible to birds
- Minimizing or ceasing pesticide-use in gardens and agricultural areas to reduce direct exposure and increase arthropod-prey abundance
- Reducing risk of disease transmission at feeders by ensuring artificial food sources are clean, and preventing depredation by house cats



*An adult male Rufous Hummingbird is held for a photo before release.*

*See the last page of this newsletter for a handy guide to safe hummingbird feeding.*

Read the full paper here:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320723005165?via%3Dihub>

This study was supported by the Tongass National Forest and the Juneau Audubon Society. Banding site is maintained by the Juneau Community Garden Association, and the City and Borough of Juneau. **Many thanks to the countless citizen scientists who assisted with trapping and data collection.**

# (Belated) Welcome to our Vice President

Nina Keller joined the Juneau Audubon Society board in March 2023.

She grew up in Germany and always had a love for nature, adventure, and books. Her love of the natural world and birds was instilled early by her family. During university, she worked at the Senckenberg Natural History Museum in Frankfurt, where she saw how



important it is to educate and instill curiosity in nature to value and appreciate the natural world. Nina's educational focus was on natural resources conflicts. She earned an M.S. in Physical Geography and an M.A. in Peace and Conflict Studies and is a trained mediator. After university, her wanderings brought her to Juneau in 2011. She called Juneau home until she took off on a two-year adventure in North America and Europe followed by a couple of years in Anchorage until she finally returned to Juneau in 2022. Nina is a NEPA Program Manager for the State of Alaska and, aside from being a JAS board member, a member of the Juneau Planning Commission. She enjoys being outside - taking photos, watching wildlife, backpacking, biking, or kayaking. And she still loves to travel to satisfy her own curiosity.

# Tree Swallow Nest Boxes Are Up!

JAS compiles a long-term data set on nest success of this aerial insectivore. **If you would like to help with this fun and important study, please contact Brenda Wright at: [at-large\\_b@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:at-large_b@juneau-audubon-society.org)**



*Volunteers at work: top photo Owen Squires (left) and Steve Squires (right), bottom photo (left to right) Steve Squires, Kari Monagle, Marsha Squires, Rusty Scudder, Helen Unruh and Brenda Wright; front Doreen Prieto*



# Remembering pioneers of the local birding community

In November, we lost local biologist **Mike (Jake) Jacobson**.



We share this remembrance by Jack Hodges:

“His life was important for Alaska. His quiet, methodical, slow approach to life led him to be the first Arctic National Wildlife Range employee to live in the coastal village of Kaktovik. There, he was accepted by the Inupiaq as much as any white government employee could in 1977. He carefully documented their subsistence lifestyle in a report titled “Kaktovik Subsistence” and in his book titled “Kaktovik Newcomer”. In 1984, Mike became the bald eagle specialist for Alaska and was stationed in Juneau, where he continued the bald eagle

habitat protection efforts of Fred Robards and Jack Hodges. The combined efforts of these three men helped lead to the elimination of clear-cut logging practices along the shorelines of Forest Service lands in southeast Alaska. In the early 1980’s, other states looked to Alaska as a source of eagles to repopulate their lands. Mike oversaw the Alaskan end of the bald eagle translocation projects. Several hundreds of bald eaglets were removed from Alaskan nests and translocated to New York, Missouri, North Carolina, Indiana and Tennessee. On June 28, 2007 the bald eagle was removed from endangered and threatened status. Mike will be missed by Alaska’s caribou, bearded seal, Dall sheep, bald eagles, Inupiaq, and all humans that champion the value of wildlife.”

JAS supporter **George Reifenstein** passed away in February.

Some notes about his interesting Alaskan life can be found here:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/juneauempire/name/george-reifenstein-jr-obituary?id=54262283>

George was also a birdwatcher and wrote to us on many occasions over the last several years to share observations from Auke Lake where he had lived since 1980 “noting some of the bird activity, always keeping the brief notes in copies of Bob Armstrong’s Birds of Alaska. The bindings would eventually fail.”

He was probably the first neighbor to become concerned about a young swan that many in the community later worked to rescue. “There has been a cygnet feeding along the shores of Auke Lake for at least 9 days. This is unusual in that there are no accompanying adults, it comes very close to the docks and home shores and we have not yet seen it fly. In the 40 years that I have been watching the birds on the lake I have never seen swans stay more than 3 days nor have I seen them in December even if there was little ice.”

“We have Mallards, kingfishers and herons whenever there is open water other frequent visitors are Barrow’s Goldeneye, Canada Geese, and Bufflehead. Occasionally we’ll see Ring Necked Ducks, Green-Wing Teal, Horned Grebe, loon, Lesser Scaup, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, White-fronted Geese and sandpipers. One Christmas there was a Wood Duck hanging out with mallards in a small lead off our shore...”

“I am not sure that we have ever had nesting loons on the lake, but we did have many summers where we would hear them for weeks at a time and didn’t consider them unusual. During the heaviest years of motorized chaos, prior to establishing 5mph boundaries, they disappeared. Now we’ll get them for days or a week at a time spread out through the open water seasons. I used to hear that there were always loons on the lake and one possibility is that nesting pairs longevity was related to the river otter presence which is high at times and seems non-existent at others.”

George also kept a log of the ice breakup annually on Auke Lake. (We have a copy of this hand-written data, if anyone is keen to make a spreadsheet and do some basic analysis, it would be interesting to see if there was an overall trend in the dates.) “In summary... the average date (since the mid 80s) when it reaches that point is April 15. Swans are often the first aquatic birds we see when things start to break up in early April.”



Finally, at the time of publication we found out that a huge figure in Alaskan ornithology, and husband to FAS Founder Mary Lou King, **James (Jim) King** passed in April. **We will share more about his long and distinguished life and career in the next Raven Newsletter.**

# Pick.Click.Give.

Thank you to those who included JAS in their pick, click, give contributions. We remind members that there is still time to contribute for 2023 until August 31. Go to [pfd.alaska.gov](https://pfd.alaska.gov) to add a pledge.



*Humpback whale in Auke Bay. Photo by G. Baluss. Have some clear photos of whale tails in your files? You can contribute to citizen science and find out where others may have seen the individual. For more info see <https://happywhale.com>*

*Juneau Audubon Society acknowledges the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples of Southeast Alaska who have been the caretakers of this land since time immemorial. We at JAS are grateful to bird and hold events, field trips, and presentations on the ancestral and traditional lands of Indigenous peoples in the Áak'w Kwáan and adjacent T'aakú Kwáan territories and throughout Lingít Aaní.*

# 2024 Juneau Audubon Society Membership Form

You can use this form or join/renew through our website: [www.juneauaudubon.org](http://www.juneauaudubon.org). Please contact [Membership@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:Membership@juneau-audubon-society.org) for questions about membership.

You can also choose to join the National Audubon Society online at <https://www.audubon.org/membership> which includes automatic membership in the local chapter. This will be JAS if your zip code is anywhere in Southeast Alaska.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**We are phasing out paper copies of the Raven. Please be sure to provide your email so we can send it to you electronically!**

*\*Note that JAS DOES NOT send members any offers or share our membership addresses with anyone.*

**New or renewing JAS Chapter Membership fee            \$10**

**Please make check payable to:  
Juneau Audubon Society, PO Box 12575, Juneau, AK 99801**

- I would like to hear about JAS field trips, bird walks, and other educational activities.
- I would be interested in volunteering with JAS for projects, bird walks, and/or educational activities.

# Handy guide for safe hummingbird feeding.

Please print and share!

## Tips for Safe Hummingbird Feeding

The best way to attract hummingbirds is to plant pesticide-free flowers.

If you decide to provide a feeder, here are some tips to make sure the feeder doesn't become a hazard. Mold or bacteria in dirty feeders can kill hummingbirds!

- ✓ Use only feeders that are easy to completely clean
- ✓ Buy several sizes bottle brushes, sponges and pipe cleaners
- ✓ Change solution and scrub feeder at least twice a week
- ✓ Use mild dish soap to scrub
- ✓ Thoroughly rinse with warm water
- ✓ Avoid using red food color; preservatives or pre-mixed solutions
- ✓ Hang the feeder in a shade to keep bees away
- ✓ Bears like sugar too – put feeders out of reach
- ✓ Ensure that the area is free from hazards like reflective windows and roaming cats

### A Recipe for Success:

- Measure one cup sugar for each 3 or 4 cups water
- Use only granulated white cane sugar and fresh clean water (never honey, or other sweeteners)
- Stir up and heat in a clean glass or stainless-steel container (never non-stick or T-Flon)
- Cool to room temperature
- Extra solution can be stored in clean glass jars in the refrigerator for up to 7 days





*The Raven* newsletter is a publication of the Juneau Audubon Society.  
Non-profit organization: 501 (C) (3) E IN 92- 0100446.

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