



The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 27 Issue No. 1

November 2004

Mission of Arctic Audubon:

Earth has unparalleled natural diversity, productivity, and beauty, and provides for life. Recognizing the full value of nature, we work to protect Alaskan ecosystems by encouraging research, education, and management that will contribute to appreciation and good stewardship of this natural heritage. We also strive to conduct our own lives in harmony with nature.

The Arctic Audubon Society publishes The Redpoll for its members monthly fall through spring. National Audubon Society (NAS) dues are \$35; new members are \$20. NAS membership includes local chapter dues. Chapter only membership is \$10 and includes the newsletter.

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Mexico: Cities to Rainforests

slide presentation and lecture by David Shaw

Monday, November 8, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

During the spring of 2003 and 2004, David Shaw conducted field work on birds in the Los Tuxtlas mountains of southern Veracruz Mexico. His field site was located in the farthest north tropical rainforest in the Americas. This slide presentation will highlight images of Mexico from the world's second largest city to the rural countryside and the plants and animals inhabiting the rainforest. David is a graduate student at UAF and an amateur photographer.



At left, sunrise over Mexico City. Above, a Collared Aracari.
Photos by David Shaw

Deformed Bills Spotted in Fairbanks

by Alaska Bird Observatory Staff

As you enjoy the flocks of Black-capped Chickadees visiting your bird feeders, please be on the lookout for birds with deformed bills. The Alaskan epidemic of Black-capped Chickadees with bill deformities continues, and researchers are still interested in reports of deformed birds. If you see a deformed chickadee (or other bird), please report your sighting to the Alaska Bird Observatory by e-mailing birds@alaskabird.org or by calling 451-7159. Please note when and where you observed the bird, how its beak was shaped, what it was doing, and how researchers can contact you if they would like additional information. If you have a digital camera, please try to photograph the bird.

Chena Dome Trail Dozed

by Frank Keim

The Citizen's Advisory Board for Alaska State Parks in the Northern Region met on September 22 in Fairbanks. Part of their agenda included a heated discussion of the fire road that was pushed through Division of Forestry lands and into the Chena River State Recreation Area to access the Boundary fire north of the Recreation Area.

During the discussion, Park Superintendent Anna Plager handed around photos of the fire road. The part of the road dozed through Division of Forestry lands looked like a four-lane highway and was the widest fire access I have ever seen. The dozer also needlessly scraped a road more than a foot deep across the surface of the non-motorized Chena Dome Trail, leaving it open to access by four wheelers and even larger four-wheel drive vehicles. Anna said this trail would eventually be blocked to prevent it from becoming compromised, but as of the first of October no action had been taken to accomplish this.

To assure the non-motorized section of the Chena Recreation Area is not further degraded, Audubon members are encouraged to email or write Anna Plager: anna_plager@dnr.state.ak.us

or

DNR Division of Parks
3700 Airport Way
Fairbanks, AK 99709-4613.

Also, please try to attend the meetings of the Citizen's Advisory Board for Alaska State Parks, which are held the second Wednesday of the month from September to May between 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the large conference room of the Fairbanks DNR building at the corner of University Avenue and Airport Road. The next meeting will be **Wednesday, November 10**.

The Sierra Club has published a report on all-terrain vehicle management in Alaska. To obtain a free, illustrated print version of "Shredded Wildlands," Ray Bane's ATV report on Alaska, email vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org with your mailing address. A "pdf" version of the report is available at the website: www.sierraclub.org/wildlands/orv/.

Energy Conservation Tip...

Low Rolling Resistance Tires Conserve Fuel

- 80% or more of a car's fuel energy is wasted by friction and other such losses
- 1.5 to 4.5% of total gasoline use could be saved if all replacement tires in use had low rolling resistance
- About 237 million replacement tires are sold in the U.S. each year—none has rolling resistance labeling

Google on "low-rolling-resistance tires" and a wealth of information is available about this fuel conservation technique. Here is a brief sample:

From the *Green Report*, March 2003,
www.greenseal.org/recommendations/CGR_LowTireResistance.pdf

"One of the most promising opportunities for fuel savings across the entire fleet of existing vehicles is to utilize low rolling resistance tires instead of standard replacement models. This change improves the inherent efficiency of the vehicle, automatically saving fuel over the typical 30,000 to 50,000 mile lifetime of a set of tires.

This report examines the opportunity for saving gasoline through use of improved tire technology and recommends particular tire models for which our initial test data suggest environmental advantages. Its findings are applicable to government and corporate fleet managers as well as individual tire buyers."

From *OnEarth*. Fall 2004, a publication of the Natural Resources Defense Council,
www.nrdc.org/onearth/04fal/briefings.asp

"Putting these tires on a Ford Focus, for example, can increase gas mileage by as much as two miles per gallon. The 160 million cars and light trucks on the road today collectively need 237 million replacement tires each year. If all of those cars had low-rolling-resistance tires, Americans could save up to 5.67 billion gallons of gas per year—reducing our annual oil imports by as much as 4 percent. So why aren't we all using them?"

ABO Events

The Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) invites you to two events in November. Both will be held at the ABO Center for Education & Research, 418 Wedgewood Drive, in the Wedgewood Resort complex. Call 451-7159 for more information.

Feathered Tales from Around the World

On Saturday, November 13, Noon-2:00 pm, *Feathered Tales from Around the World* offers activities for all ages. Come hear traditional stories, make crafts, and even learn to talk to birds. Hear native Alaskan tales of Raven at 12:30 pm and meet a live raven at 1:00 pm. The cost is \$2 per child for ABO members and \$3 per child for nonmembers.

Nesting Ecology of Tree Swallows

On Monday, November 15 at 7:00 pm, Luke DeCicco will present a free public lecture titled *Think Inside the Box: a look at the nesting ecology of Tree Swallows*. Luke is a student researcher with the Alaska Bird Observatory.

Upcoming Events at Creamer's Field

Mark your calendar for these events sponsored by the Friends of Creamer's Field. All events will be held at the Farmhouse Visitor Center, 1300 College Road. Call 452-5162 for more information

Thanksgiving for the Birds

Come to the Farmhouse Saturday, November 27, Noon-4:00 pm to build a milk-carton birdhouse, or other treat for our winter birds to eat! Open to children and adults.

Tree Lighting and Caroling

Wednesday, December 1, 6:00 pm.

Dress warmly! Everyone is welcome!

Holiday Gifts from Creamer's Field

Do your Holiday Shopping and support Friends of Creamer's Field at the Farmhouse Visitor Center gift shop. The Farmhouse will be open December 1-22, Monday through Friday, 5-8:00 pm and on Saturdays, Noon-4:00 pm.

Where the Birds Are!

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival
January 14-17, 2005

Migrate to one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots and join the Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for the 8th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Morro Bay — located on California's scenic Central Coast — is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway, and is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds. At last year's festival, 213 species of birds were identified!

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival gives you the chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops. Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers.


For more information about the Festival, check out the website www.morro-bay.net/birds, where you can have your name added to the mailing list for the 2005 brochure, due out in October. Registration deadline is December 31, 2004 and early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

Join us for the
**2004 Annual FUNdraising
AUCTION**
for the
**Northern Alaska
Environmental Center**

**Saturday, November 13
Wedgewood Resort
Tickets \$20**

5 pm • Doors Open
6 pm • Hors d'oeuvres Social
7 pm • Auction Action Begins

Call 452-5021 for information





FeederWatchers Make Unexpected Sightings

Volunteers Wanted!

by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Some might be surprised to find hummingbirds at feeders in the Southeast in winter, or robins and bluebirds at feeders in the North. "Common knowledge" places these birds in warmer climates during the coldest times of the year. Thanks to the help of FeederWatchers, researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are learning that conventional wisdom is not always correct.

Much is being learned about bird populations, thanks to more than 15,000 bird observers who participate in Project Feeder Watch, a Cornell citizen-science project in which volunteers count the numbers and kinds of bird species that visit their winter bird feeders around their homes. Participants send their observations via paper data forms or over the Web to researchers at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. These observations are combined so that scientist can determine the population status and distribution of the nation's birds over time and across their North American winter range.

People of all ages and skill levels are invited to help scientists better understand bird populations. Learn more about Project FeederWatch at www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw or by calling 800-843-2473. The \$15 enrollment fee helps defray the cost of materials, which include an identification poster, calendar, handbook, instructions, access to the online data entry system, and a one-year subscription to *BirdScope*.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a not-for-profit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds.

Recycling idea...

Egg cartons and paper grocery sacks can be recycled at:

Fairbanks Community Foodbank
725 26th Avenue
Fairbanks

Thanksgiving Bird Count

This is one winter count which can be made in comfort regardless of the weather.

by Dr. John G. Hewston, Humboldt State University

Thanksgiving Bird Counts are to take place on Thanksgiving Day, November 25. The counter chooses the time that best fits his/her holiday schedule. It might even provide a welcome but short break on the holiday since the count is to take only ONE hour. The counter selects a count circle that is only 15 feet in diameter. Count Circles are usually located around whatever attracts birds—feeders, baths, cover, etc. Most participants select a count area visible from a comfortable spot near a window. However, some counters do go outdoors and make their counts in favorite bird areas. The same circles should be used each year. Record results on the form on page five of this newsletter. Counters should send in reports even if no birds were seen during the count hour.

Last year we finally broke the 500 barrier—553 participants turned in 570 count reports and tallied 168 species in the eleven Western States plus Alaska. The most numerous species were House Sparrow (3,829), House Finch (3,027), Dark-eyed Junco (2,634), Mourning Dove (1,206), California Quail (968), Black-capped Chickadee (812), American Goldfinch (801), White-crowned Sparrow (724), Steller's Jay (546), and Starling (521). The Pine Siskin dropped from third place in 2001 to 16th in 2002 and on down to 20th in 2003.

Although not as well known as Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys, the Thanksgiving Counts were begun in 1966 by Dr. Ernest Edwards and the Lynchburg Bird Club in Virginia. Dr. John Hewston at Humboldt State University took over as coordinator and compiler for the Western States, Alaska and Hawaii in 1992.

44th Annual Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, January 2, 2005

Questions or comments?
Call Gail Mayo, 479-2954.

Arctic Audubon's Birdathon Teams Report

For the 2004 Farthest North Birdathon, Sherry Lewis and Frank Keim were Arctic Audubon's official adult Birdathon team, and Joseph and Lilly Ransdell-Green along with parent/driver Tom Green made up the Audubon Youth Team.

Within a roughly 15-mile radius of Fairbanks, Sherry and Frank listed 75 species in 17 hours—with a little sleep in between. Some of their favorite sightings were a Horned owl with two fluffy white young peering over the nest, waiting for dad to come down off his perch for some food; a Hammond's Flycatcher building her nest; a Boreal Owl female curiously ogling them from the hole of her nest box; a couple of flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls exhibiting some fascinating mating behavior; large flocks of Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpipers in a feeding frenzy on a recent hatch of "smoke flies" near the ponds at the Fairbanks airport; a lone Dunlin looking very lonely; a couple of Stilt Sandpipers; a stunning Townsend's Warbler in full sunlight; an Eagle on her nest, with papa patiently guarding nearby; and many more.

Arctic Audubon's Youth Team birded along the Dalton Highway between the Yukon Bridge (milepost 56) and Deadhorse (milepost 414). While driving the highway and taking short hikes, Joseph and Lilly counted 41 species. In his Birdathon report, Joseph summarized their interesting observations as follows:

"We hiked on tundra just past Galbraith Lake and saw Lapland Longspurs. We also saw many Long-tailed Jaegers. An uncommon bird that we saw was the Yel-

low Wagtail, which we saw on the North Slope at Mile 327. I saw a Glaucous Gull that had a nest on a small island in a pond. It dive-bombed a pair of Common Ravens and me! We also saw an arctic fox that was hunting. It was being dive-bombed by a Long-Tailed Jaeger. We saw several Short-eared Owls."

Audubon Board members David Shaw and Amy Turner birded the Dalton Highway for their Birdathon as well. Spectacular weather greeted them in the Brooks Range. Yellow Wagtails, a Yellow-billed Loon, Northern Hawk Owl and Smiths Longspurs were the highlights. As enjoyable as the birds, was a herd of young Dall sheep butting heads on the road shoulder and a grizzly ambling across the tundra. Fabulous birding in the far north!

Those who participated wish to thank all who pledged support for their efforts.

Arctic Audubon Supports Alaska Bird Camp

by Tricia Blake, Alaska Bird Observatory

If you happened to visit the Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) in June, you might have seen some unusual sights: "Sandhill Cranes" teetering and giggling as they tried to reach "Texas" without touching the grass, balsa wood gliders modeled after different avian wing designs soaring past the building, and eight pairs of binoculars glued to a Solitary Sandpiper delicately poised on a log in the slough.

Fifteen youth ages 8-12 participated in two sessions of the Alaska Bird Camp from June 7-18. The camp introduced kids to the basics of bird watching, the characteristics of different avian groups and their habitats, and the fundamentals of scientific research. Daily activities included games, walks, activities, and guest speakers. Throughout the week, campers worked together to make careful observations, formulate questions and hypotheses, and collect and analyze data. They presented the results of their hard work to parents, friends, and ABO staff on the last day of camp.

Both weeks were filled with learning, exploration, great birding, and fun with the newest generation of field ornithologists! Thank you to the Arctic Audubon Society for supporting the Alaska Bird Camp in 2004!



Lilly and Joseph pose near the Yukon River Bridge before beginning their Birdathon along the Dalton Highway. Photo by Tom Green

2004 Farthest North Birdathon Results

The 2004 Farthest North Birdathon will be remembered as the year of teams spread far and wide across Alaska. This year we had 69 counters in Fairbanks, Barrow, Deadhorse, Nome, Adak, Hyder, Cordova, Valdez, Circle, Gambell, and all along the Dalton Highway. The result was some great new birds added to our cumulative Birdathon bird list, including Laysan Albatross, Mongolian Plover, Wood Sandpiper, Dovekie, Black Swift, Redthroated Pipit, White Wagtail, Bluethroat, and House Finch. Luke DeCicco held on to his title as champion fundraiser, collecting an impressive \$3,884 in pledges. He and “Tattling Tattlers” teammates Nick Hajdukovich and Joyce Potter also held on to their title as top money-raising team for their Gambell to Nome birdathon. Kudos go to their pilot and driver, Bob Hajdukovich, and Frontier Flying Service for supporting the team.

Over \$22,000 was raised for ABO and the Arctic Audubon Society during the 2004 Farthest North Birdathon. The Golden Binoculars trophy for Most Species Seen was claimed by ABO director Nancy DeWitt and teammates Jim DeWitt, Steve Springer, and Steve Reidsma claimed. Despite 22 hours of rain, the “Greater Whitelegs” found 117 species between Valdez and Fairbanks, tying the Farthest North Birdathon record.

In addition to all of the counters and their sponsors, we extend a HUGE thank you to our event’s title sponsors—Steve Neumuth Advertising and Alaska Airlines. We also thank the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* for their advertising support, Trademark Screenprinters for donating artwork services, and Wells Fargo Bank, Everts Air Alaska, ConocoPhillips Alaska, and Spinach Creek Farms for goodie bag items. The Greater Whitelegs are grateful to Wells Fargo Bank and Tim Cerny for their \$500 sponsorships, and to Aurora Motors for providing a van free of charge.

Greater Whitelegs team: Steve Springer, Nancy DeWitt, Jim DeWitt, and Steve Reidsma



Prizes and Awards

Winner of Alaska Airlines tickets: Jim DeWitt

Most Money Raised:

Individual: Luke DeCicco (\$3,884), Nicholas Hajdukovich (\$2,401), Carol McIntyre (\$2,057), Nancy DeWitt (\$1,663); Jim DeWitt (\$2,478), Sherry Lewis (\$823), Laurel Devaney (\$723), Frank Keim (\$650), Steve Kendall (\$560), Joyce Potter (\$544), Steve Neumuth (\$450)

Team (based on average/person): Tattling Tattlers - \$2,276

Family: Raven Rolls (Laurel Devaney & Ken Russell) - \$823

Most Environmentally Friendly Teams: Raven Rolls - 71 species on bicycle and foot; Pilsner Powered Pedal Pushers (Carol McIntyre, Debbie Nigro, Steve Kendall, Ray Hander, Ryan Drum, Susan Wills, Robyn Burch) - 64 species on bike and foot; Tricia Blake & Tony LaCortiglia - 33 species on foot; Bird Dogs (Jeanette, Jenni & Luci Moore) - 21 species on foot

Most Sponsors: Nicholas Hajdukovich (73)

Highest Single Pledge Raised: \$2,020 by Luke DeCicco

Best Effort by a Rookie: Steve Kendall (\$592 in pledges)

Most Improved Birdathoner: Jim DeWitt (\$873 more than last year)

Most Improved Birder: Anne-Marie Compton

Youngest Participant: Natasha Lang (4 months old)

Largest Team - Fairbanks Kiwanis Club (9 members)

Best Team Name: Moist Owlettes

Best Birdathon Story - Pampers & Plovers (Andrew & Natasha Lang)

Rarest Bird Seen for that Area: Great Blue Heron by Lorrie Hawkins in Fairbanks

Farthest West Counters: Adak - Philip Martin & Luke DeCicco

Farthest East Counters: Hyder - Judy Dearborn & Ed Clark

Farthest North Counters: Barrow and the Chukchi Sea - Ted Swem

Farthest South Counters: Adak - Philip Martin and Luke DeCicco

Most Species Seen in Alaska: 117 (ties record) by Greater Whitelegs

Most Species Seen by an Interior Alaska Team: 75 by Audubon’s Jezzabunk Birders (Sherry Lewis & Frank Keim)

Most Species Seen by a Fairbanks Team: 73 species (tie) by the Raven Rolls and Andrea Swingley

Most Species Seen by a Team Outside the Fairbanks North Star Borough: 101 by the Tattling Tattlers in Nome and Gambell

Other Valued Counters: Arctic Audubon Youth Team (Joseph & Lily Ransdell-Green & Tom Green), John & Tracie Cogdill, Joan Gaudin, David Shaw, Amy Turner, Lisa & Jack Whitman, Jennifer Ingalls, Bob & Bobbie Ritchie, Amal Ajmi, Tony Payne, Karen Fagerstrom, Bob & Pat Brandt, Opal & Gene Shepherd, Ron & Mary Teel, and Tim Walker

Thank you to our Birdathon prize donors:

Marty Baldrige • Nancy DeWitt • DeeDee Hammond • Nancy Hausle-Johnson • Sherry Lewis • Cathy Gamble • Gail Mayo • Bill Morgan • Ram Paish • Ken Russell • Dave Totten • ABR, Inc. Environmental Research & Services • Betsy Chronic Woodcarving • Big Ray’s • Birchside Studios • Brunton • Critters ‘n Things • Denali Raft Adventures • Ester Hatworks • Fieldfare • Hot Licks Ice Cream • Interior Yoga • Judie Gumm Designs • Ivory Jack’s • John Nelson Woodcarvings • Kenai Fjords Tours • Lavelle’s Bistro • Sourdough Fuel • Northern T’ai Chi Ch’uan Association • Riverboat Discovery Fairbanks • Turtle Club • Sea Treasures by C • Soho Coho Gallery • Stan Stephens Cruises • Tanana Valley State Fair • Tatonduk Outfitters/Everts Air Alaska • The Artworks • Two Rivers Lodge • UAF Athletic Department • University Chevron • Wilderness Expressions • Wildlife & Wood • Zach’s Restaurant

Arctic Audubon Society
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www.arcticaudubon.org

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Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

Arctic Audubon Board Meeting, Nov. 1, 6:00 pm

Members are welcome at the monthly Board meeting held in Room 201, Irving Bldg, UAF campus.

Mexico: Cities to Rainforests, Nov. 8, 7:00 pm

Slide presentation by David Shaw at the Noel Wien Library Auditorium. See page one.

Nesting Ecology of Tree Swallows, Monday, November 15, 7:00 pm.

Lecture by Luke DeCicco at AK Bird Observatory.

Thanksgiving for the Birds, Saturday, November 27, Noon-4:00 pm

Bird lovers of all ages are invited to make and fill bird feeders. Sponsored by Friends of Creamer's Field.

Arctic Audubon Board Meeting, Dec. 6, 6:00 pm

Members are welcome at the monthly Board meeting held in Room 201, Irving Bldg, UAF campus.

Arctic Audubon Board of Directors

email address: arcticaudubon@netscape.net

President: Gail Mayo
Vice President: Amy Turner
Secretary: Ann Wood
Treasurer: Gail Mayo
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Programs: Open
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Newsletter: Mary Zalar
Membership: Mary Zalar
Field Trips: Tom Green
Birdathon: Sherry Lewis
Web Site: Jim Logan
Alaska Audubon Board Liaison: Frank Keim

Birding Hotline: (907) 451-9213



Updated by Laurel Devaney & Ken Russell

Report interesting bird sightings;
learn what others have spotted.

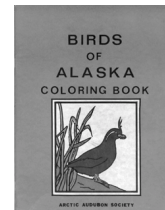
also at

www.virtualbirder.com/vbirder/realbirds/index.html

Birds of Alaska Coloring Book

for sales information call

Gail Mayo, 479-2954 or
Amy Turner, 474-4227



Audubon Society Membership Form

- Introductory rate, \$20 Two Year membership, \$30
 Student or Senior rate \$15

Membership includes both National Audubon and the local chapter, Arctic Audubon. You will receive National Audubon's magazine, *Audubon*, and Arctic Audubon's newsletter, *The Redpoll*.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- I do not want the Audubon Society to share my name with other organizations.

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ (Make check payable to National Audubon Society)

Send to: Arctic Audubon Society
PO Box 82098
Fairbanks, AK 99708

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7XCH

- Chapter Only Membership, \$10.

For membership in Arctic Audubon Society *only*, check box and make check payable to Arctic Audubon.