



The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 29 Issue No. 3

December 2006

Plan To Join Us for a Seasonal Birding Festivity!

By Gail Mayo

We hope you will all join us Saturday, December 30th for the Christmas Bird Count (details inside). Fairbanks birders have much to be proud of as they gather for the 46th time to celebrate the plentiful birdlife in our community. Last year we were one of 38 counts in Alaska. We saw 24 species and almost 6,000 birds. While other places in Alaska totaled up to 82 species (Kodiak), we had the highest numbers in North America for three species, Common Raven (1644), Gray Jay (161) and Boreal Owl (3). Additionally we had the highest counts in the United States for both Common and Hoary Redpolls. What makes this all possible is your enthusiasm for going out before light on a potentially miserable day and freezing your fingers trying to focus on little grey bits flitting out of sight in snowy trees, and then trying to mark numbers down.

In the past several years Fairbanks has been among the 50 counts (out of a total of 2,060 counts) which manage to attract over 100 participants. All these fun facts are gleaned from the Christmas Bird Count edition of *American Birds*, volume 60. The more sobering facts are there also. After 106 years, the Christmas Bird Count results can be used to track changing bird populations and uncover trends. Your continued participation is the most important part of this effort. We look forward to seeing you at the compilation potluck after the count where stories and numbers will fly.

Winter Bird ID Workshop December 12, 7:00 pm

Learn how to identify winter birds found in interior Alaska and get information and registration materials for the Christmas Bird Count. This great refresher or beginning class will be held at the Alaska Bird Observatory Center for Education & Research. The workshop is free for ABO and Arctic Audubon Society members and is \$5/nonmembers.

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.

Inside...

AK Winter Bird Book	5
Backyard Bird Count	5
Calendar	6
Christmas Bird Count ..	3, 4
Ketchum Photo Exhibit	5
Kid's Bird Club	5
Student Scholarship	5

Eider Outreach and Education on the North Slope

presentation by Neesha Wendling, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Monday, January 8, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

The Spectacled Eider and the Alaska breeding population of Steller's Eiders were listed as threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (1993 and 1997, respectively) due to concerns over apparent declines in numbers and a reduction of nesting range in Alaska. In 1991, the Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office and the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management initiated a joint study of the breeding biology of Steller's Eiders near Barrow. In 1999, we began conducting annual breeding pair ground surveys, and the community expressed the need for local involvement. Outreach efforts in Barrow have been ongoing and expanding since 1999



Steller's Eider
© Mark Wilson

continued on page two

Eider Program

continued from page one

with positive results. Recovery Plans for the Spectacled Eider and Steller's Eider identify high priority actions needed to achieve recovery of the listed populations.

Since outreach and education are important methods of achieving goals stated in both eider recovery plans, efforts are being expanded to other villages on the Slope. ***Eider Journey*** is a program that joins high school students in rural villages near key nesting and wintering areas with scientists, professors, and local community members to monitor eider populations and conduct research on eider habitat. Similarly, the ***North Slope Bird & Cultural Camp*** helps middle-school age students learn about birds on the North Slope in both western science and traditional contexts. In addition to youth outreach, visits to villages, workshops, and education about poisoning from lead shot are part of ongoing efforts to involve local communities in eider recovery.

Neesha Wendling works for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, primarily on outreach and education in rural Alaska. She received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Zoology from the University of Idaho, where she researched the physiology of salmonids. She's lived in Alaska since 1999.



Students examine an owl nest during a North Slope Bird and Cultural Camp. Photo by Neesha Wendling

Important Bird Area Program in Alaska

by Iain Stenhouse, Director of Bird Conservation, Alaska Audubon

The Important Bird Area (IBA) program is part of a proactive global initiative by BirdLife International to identify sites of outstanding value for birds. As the U.S. partner to BirdLife, the National Audubon Society is responsible for this program across the country. Sites generally qualify as an IBA if they support at least 1% of a species' local, flyway, or global population.

In Alaska, the IBA program has been underway since 2000. By 2004, one hundred and fifteen sites had been identified in the Bering Sea and Cook Inlet regions alone, the details of which are publicly available on the IBA pages of the National Audubon Society's website at www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html.

The coastal and marine areas west and south of Barrow were included in the Bering Sea project. Around twenty-five sites between Norton Sound and Barrow were recognized during that project, including Peard Bay, Kasagaluk Lagoon, Ledyard Bay, Cape Lisburne-Thompson, Little Diomede, and the central Seward Peninsula, to name but a few.

A state wildlife grant, awarded in 2004, allowed Audubon Alaska to continue its IBA work and initiate a statewide project aimed at 'filling in' the rest of the map. At present, a total of 41 potential sites from all across the state are being tracked. Of these, 17 nominations have been completed, many of which have yet to be reviewed by the Alaska and National technical committees, while 24 others are in various stages of progress.

As part of this project, the coastal and marine areas east of Barrow, and the interior Arctic region, have been a major focus. In this area, five site nominations have been completed so far, namely Teshekpuk Lake, Colville River Delta, Northeast Arctic coastal plain, Cooper Island, and the Eastern Beaufort Sea coastal lagoons. The first four of these sites have recently been reviewed by the Alaska technical committee, which chose to accept them as IBAs of local importance. Three of them (Teshekpuk Lake, Colville River Delta, and the Northeast Arctic coastal plain) will be forwarded to the National technical committee for review of their continental and global importance. A further six potential site nominations are in progress or actively being considered, namely the Upper Colville River, Porcupine River, Yukon Flats, Creamer's Field, Iditarod Lowlands, and a section of the foothills of the Alaska Range near Denali.

If you have suggestions of other northern sites that may meet the criteria for IBA status and/or you would like to contribute to this global project by writing an IBA nomination, please contact Dr. Iain Stenhouse at the Audubon Alaska office, 907-276-7034 or istenhouse@alaska.net.

46th ANNUAL FAIRBANKS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
Saturday, December 30, 2006 during daylight hours
Compilation Potluck Dinner: 5:00 pm at the Ken Kunkle Hall

To participate, contact the coordinator of the area in which you want to count. Please call or e-mail soon to give the coordinators time to organize. If you have no preference or can't reach your coordinator, please call or e-mail the compiler, Gail Mayo at 479-2954 or lgmayo@mosquitonet.com.

West Goldstream

Brian Lawhead
455-6849
lawhead@mosquitonet.com

Ester

Philip Martin
479-7384
martin@mosquitonet.com

University

Gail Mayo
479-2954
lgmayo@mosquitonet.com

Chena Ridge

Joyce Potter
479-3523

East Goldstream

Andrea Swingley
479-9729
aswingley@gmail.com

Farmer's Loop

Jamie Marschner
458-0462
marschner@polarnet.com

Steese/Wainwright

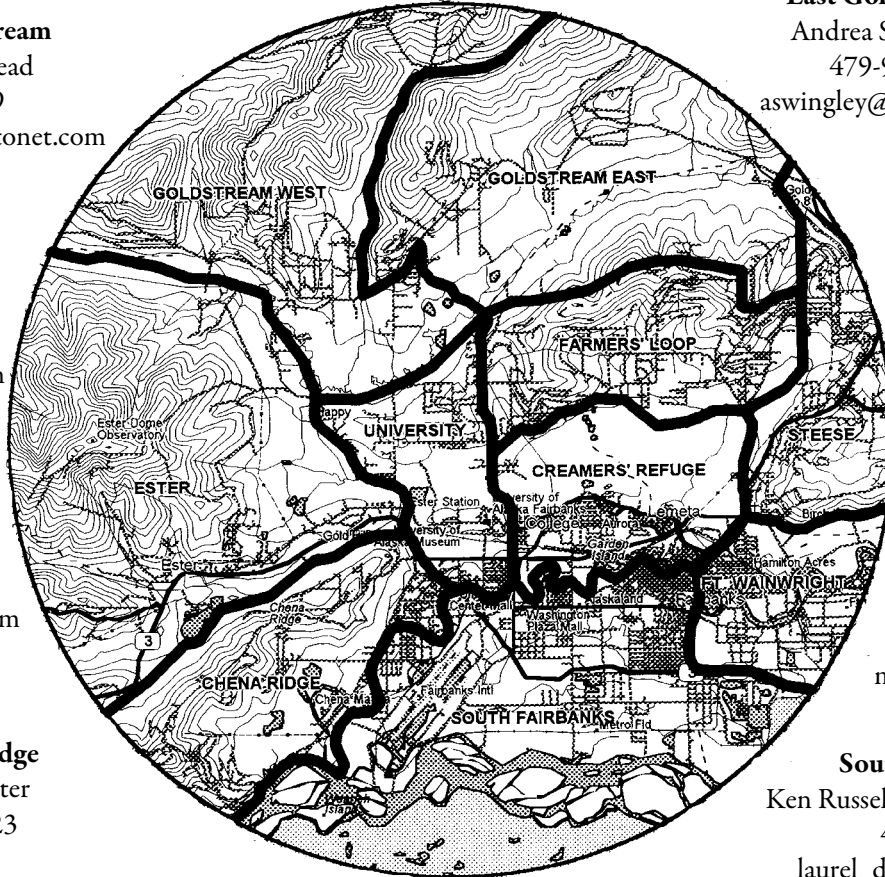
Carol McIntyre
457-4213
hander@mosquitonet.com

Creamer's Refuge

Mark Ross
459-7301
mross@fishgame.state.ak.us

South Fairbanks

Ken Russell & Laurel Devaney
488-8170
laurel_devaney@fws.gov



Each Christmas Bird Count lasts 24 hours and covers a 177 square mile circle that is 15 miles in diameter. Centered on the intersection of Yankovitch and Dalton Trail, the Fairbanks Circle includes Ester Dome, parts of the Tanana and Chena Rivers, the dump, Ft. Wainwright cooling ponds, and plenty of typical interior habitat.

The object of the count is to observe birds in as much of the count circle as possible without duplication. **Each bird must be identified at least to genus.** Because our daylight time is limited, we need many field observers willing to cover assigned areas. Birds are also counted at feeders by observers who record the largest number of birds of each species seen together on that day. Feeder counters should contact their area coordinator. During "count week" (the three days before and after count day), additional species seen or heard within the count circle are added to the final list of species observed. Please use the data entry sheet on the reverse side to record your observations and bring it to the compilation potluck.

Plan to join us after dark for the **compilation and potluck dinner (meat provided) at the Ken Kunkle Hall** on Goldstream Road near Ivory Jack's. See directions at the website www.goldstreamvalley.net/kunkel. Doors open at 4:30 pm and dinner is at 5:00 pm. We look forward to seeing you there.

A \$5 fee is required from all field observers over 18 years old. All observers under 18, feeder watchers, and owl listeners are not required to pay, but will not receive the CBC issue of *American Birds* if they do not pay. Make sure we have your correct mailing address and tell us if you do not wish to receive the CBC issue. The Christmas Bird Count is on-line with data from 1900 to present at www.audubon.org.

If you can't attend the potluck be sure to contact your area coordinator before 5:00 pm.



The Allen River Enters Lake Chauekuktuli

Photo by Robert Glenn Ketchum

Southwest Alaska: A World of National Parks and Wildlife Refuges at the Crossroads

Through January 28th, this University of Alaska Museum of the North Special Exhibit features Robert Glenn Ketchum's large-scale landscape portraits from Southwest Alaska, a vast watershed draining from the Alaska and Aleutian mountain ranges.

Count for the Birds in America's Great Backyard February 16-19, 2007

Join with thousand of others to find out how many birds are being seen in your area and across the continent this winter. By participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count, you help document where birds are, and track changes in their numbers compared to previous years, helping scientists paint a picture of the state of birds this winter. For more information, and to view results, go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc/

- No fee or registration required
- All ages and skill levels welcome
- Track results in real time online
- Count in your backyard, balcony, schoolyard, park, wildlife refuge

Book on Alaska's Winter Birds

Winter Wings is a bound collection of 23 articles featuring Alaska's winter bird species. Each article includes information on identification, vocalizations, and natural history, along with color photos. The profiles were produced for publication in newspapers across Alaska with a grant from the Watchable Wildlife Conservation Trust. The bound collection makes a great stocking stuffer and is available in the Alaska Bird Observatory's gift shop for \$12.

Student Scholarship Offered to Shorebird Festival

The Tim Schantz Memorial Foundation will send a college-age scholarship recipient to the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival in Homer, Alaska, May 10-13, 2007 to help in the student's study of migrating shorebirds. The Tim Schantz Foundation has been established to insure that Tim's passion for birds lives on in other young aspiring students. The scholarship trip includes the following:

- round trip airfare to Anchorage; transfer to Homer
- four nights lodging for the festival
- a copy of the ABA Alaska Finding Guide

To request a scholarship application, e-mail schantzbird@aol.com or write to Tim Schantz Memorial Foundation, 6608 Medinah Drive, Ft. Worth, TX 76132.

Bird Club for Fairbanks Kids

The Arctic Moon Bird Club is the Alaska Bird Observatory's kid's bird club! The club is open to kids ages 10 and older in the Fairbanks area who are interested in learning more about birds, bird-watching, and the natural world. Club members participate in one activity per month. The membership fee is \$12 (\$1/month). Check ABO's website at www.alaskabird.org for some of this year's activities. If you are interested in joining the Arctic Moon Bird Club, contact Tricia at 451-7159 or tblake@alaskabird.org.



Arctic Moon Bird Club member, Jesse Miller-Harris, sets four Potter traps, used to trap chickadees at ABO's bird feeding station. The bird club worked with ABO biologists to measure changing fat levels on Black-capped Chickadees throughout a winter day.



Arctic Audubon Society
 PO Box 82098
 Fairbanks, AK 99708
www.arcticaudubon.org

Nonprofit Org.
 US Postage
 PAID
 Permit No. 181
 Fairbanks AK

Upcoming Events--Mark Your Calendar

Giving a Voice to Nature—Sharing the North Through Photography by Ken Whitten, December 14, 7 pm

Sponsored by NAEC at the Noel Wien Library.

Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 30

Details on page 3 & 4. Compilation Potluck Dinner at 5:00 pm at the Ken Kunkle Hall on Goldstream Rd.

Arctic Audubon Board Meeting, Monday, January 2, 5:30 pm, UAF Natural Science Facility, Rm 300

Members are welcome at our business meeting.

Eider Outreach & Education on the North Slope, Monday, January 8, 7:00 pm, Noel Wien Library

Biologist Neesha Wendling will talk about Spectacled and Steller's Eiders on the North Slope.

Great Backyard Bird Count, February 16-19

Details on page 5 and at www.birdsource.org/gbbc

Arctic Audubon Board of Directors

- email address: arcticaudubon@netscape.net
- President: Gail Mayo (479-2954)
- Vice President: Open
- Secretary: Open
- Treasurer: Gail Mayo (479-2954)
- Education: Megan Phillips (456-1000)
- Conservation: Kristi Bailey (479-4874)
- Hospitality: Brook Gamble (456-3775)
- Programs: Lauren Attanas (474-9736)
- Publicity: Open
- Newsletter: Mary Zalar (479-4547)
- Membership: Mary Zalar (479-4547)
- Field Trips: Tom Green (452-6370)
- Birdathon: Sherry Lewis (479-0848)
- Web Site: Jim Logan
- Alaska Audubon Board: Frank Keim (451-9308)

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

National Audubon Society New Member 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
A52
7XCH

Chapter Only Membership, \$10

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