

# The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 29 Issue No. 4

January 2007



*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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Three-toed sloth © Frank Keim

## Costa Rica and Panama: Land of Birds and Coffee

*presentation by Frank Keim*

Monday, February 12, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

Frank Keim and his wife Jennifer recently spent two months visiting Costa Rica and Panama. While there they discovered that Costa Rica has one of the best records in the western hemisphere for protecting the natural environment. Costa Rica's ecotourism infrastructure is well developed and welcomes those who enjoy seeing tropical wildlife and watching and identifying birds.

In addition to identifying 250 different species of birds, Frank and Jennifer drank some of the best coffee they've ever tasted in their lives. They also learned about shade-grown, bird-friendly coffee, which is being cultivated by a growing number of coffee plantation owners, especially in Costa Rica.

Frank and Jennifer found Ticos and Panameños to be some of the friendliest people in Latin America who do everything they can to make your stay a happy one in their countries. Come see for yourselves and you, too, might want to visit this land of birds and coffee.



Costa Rican ox cart

© Frank Keim

## Tanana Lakes Recreation Area Public Meeting

Tuesday, February 13, 5:30 pm

by John Haas, FNSB Parks and Recreation

The next public meeting for Tanana Lakes Recreation Area project is scheduled for Tuesday, February 13 at 5:30 pm in Pioneer Park's Centennial Center for the Arts. Copies of the Tanana Lakes Scoping Report Executive Summary and Tanana Lakes Project Questionnaire Results are available on the Borough's web site at <http://co.fairbanks.ak.us/ParksandRecreation/OngoingProjects/>. Over 170 online surveys were collected, 40 public testimonials were recorded at the meeting held December 6th, and several dozen individuals took the time to submit written comments. If you wish to see a copy of the entire "Agency and Public Scoping Summary Report," please contact John Haas by email at [jhaas@co.fairbanks](mailto:jhaas@co.fairbanks) or by phone at 459-1198.

The FNSB Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Public Works are working together with USKH to conduct a Master Planning process, which began in October 2006. Numerous agencies, organizations, community groups and individuals have expressed strong support for the proposed recreation area.

## Bank Swallow Colony Destroyed

Last summer, a bank swallow colony was illegally destroyed while the birds were nesting. The nest site was located at the gravel pit on the north side of the Johansen Highway near the Steese Highway. Dave Rippetto, a law enforcement officer with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, is pursuing legal action. He would like to establish how long the colony was in the gravel bank prior to being bulldozed. If you have relevant information, contact Dave at 456-2335 or by email at [Dave\\_rippeto@fws.gov](mailto:Dave_rippeto@fws.gov).

## Audubon Board Positions Open

Join the Arctic Audubon Society Board and work with a delightful group of people on a variety of bird and conservation-related projects. Board meetings are the first Tuesday of the month, although we do not meet during the summer. Several positions are open. For more information, contact Gail Mayo at 479-2954 or any of the other Board members listed on the back of this newsletter.

## Arctic Audubon Offers Small Grants

Arctic Audubon Society's Small Grants Program funds conservation related projects that support our mission to protect Alaskan ecosystems by encouraging research, education, and management that will contribute to appreciation and good stewardship of our natural heritage.

In 2007, Arctic Audubon will consider applications for small grants of up to \$2,000. Partial funding may be offered to successful applicants. Projects should enhance the understanding and conservation of Alaska's organisms and/or ecosystems. Projects dedicated to increasing public awareness and knowledge of conservation issues will also be considered. High school and middle school students and organizations are encouraged to apply.

Applicants should submit a cover letter introducing themselves, a single page description of the project, a budget, and a timeline for completion. Successful recipients will be expected to submit a report of outcomes and be willing to give a short presentation on the project (if requested).

Applications are due March 15, 2007. For information about Arctic Audubon Society, please visit our website at [www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org). Please direct questions and submit all materials to [arcticaudubon@netscape.net](mailto:arcticaudubon@netscape.net).

Arctic Audubon Society is a nonprofit conservation organization based in Fairbanks, Alaska. As a chapter of the National Audubon Society, Arctic Audubon's region encompasses the area north of the Alaska Range, including the North Slope and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

## Combine Bird Watching & Conservation in the Great Backyard Bird Count

What mid-winter activity is fun, easy, free, and helps bird conservation? What can parents and teachers do with children that connects them to a whole new world of natural wonders? This February, the tenth annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), sponsored by National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will give everyone a chance to discover the birds in their neighborhood and "Count for the Record."

During February 16-19, 2007, people of all ages, from beginners to experts, are invited to join this event that spans all of the United States and Canada. Participants can take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges. Observers simply count the highest number of each species they see during an outing or a sitting, and enter their tally on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site at [www.bird-source.org/gbbc](http://www.bird-source.org/gbbc).

Participants who want to hone their bird watching skills can learn more from the Great Backyard Bird Count web site, which offers identification tips and access to photos, sounds, maps, and natural history information on more than 500 bird species. People can also submit photos to an online gallery showcasing the dazzling array of winter birds found during the GBBC. Competitions add another element of fun, including a photo contest, rankings for most numerous birds, and the coveted "checklist champ" title for towns, states, and provinces with the highest participation.

## 2006 Christmas Bird Count Summary

By Gail Mayo

The 2006 Christmas Bird Count was another grand affair. We had an all time high of 114 participants thanks to the efforts of all the volunteer coordinators. Ester easily takes the prize for 11 parties out in the field; this is, of course, just Ester enthusiasm! West Goldstream had 9 feeders counted. Several count areas had parties of 4 or even 5 out, and several parties included kids. My summary has kids out counting in 4 areas: Steese, Chena Ridge, Ester, and University. I hope I didn't miss anyone. Many parties followed (or slightly modified) their traditional Christmas count searches for the nth year in a row. These are the true heroes since their consistent efforts give more credibility to count results. Thanks to all, especially those of you who have tried to establish and maintain traditions.

Two species attained high count status in this count. This means the highest number counted in all counts so far. The Mallard, seen in 26 of our 46 counts topped its old high number of 122 in 2004 by totaling 188 birds seen. Boreal Chickadees, probably seen in most Fairbanks Christmas Bird Counts were seen in record high numbers; 298, up from 269 seen in 2001. Redpoll numbers were high, although not as high as in 2004.

Sharp-eyed birders saw 3 unusual species, Shoveler (duck), Sharpshinned Hawk, and Lincoln's Sparrow. One Sharpie was seen back in 1992 and one Shoveler was seen way back in 1987. This was the first Fairbanks Christmas Count record for the Lincoln's Sparrow in 46 years of counting.

While most parties saw 5 or 6 different species, several saw 8 species and one saw 10 species. Hats off to the DeWitts for finding 10 species and maintaining their reign as high species counters for this count. Kudos to all the parties in the Steese/Fort Wainwright area who together saw a total of 15 species.

Many thanks to the area coordinators who once again did a great job of prying people out on a snowy day that turned out to be quite nice in the afternoon. Thanks to Brian Lawhead, Andrea Swingley, Carol McIntyre, Laurel Devaney, Ken Russell, Joyce Potter (who functioned even though quite sick), Philip Martin, Mark Ross and Jamie Marschner. MANY thanks to Jim DeWitt for handling the data stream so



efficiently. We look forward to seeing you all next year on Saturday, December 29, 2007.

*Falling snow makes it a challenge to spot a Pine Grosbeak during the 2006 Christmas Bird Count.*

© Barb Gorman



*Spring at Creamer's Field*

© Ken Whitten

## Proposal to Designate Creamer's Field an IBA

By Jim Chumbley

In last month's *Redpoll*, an article by Iain Stenhouse of Audubon Alaska mentioned the possibility of designating Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge an Important Bird Area (IBA). I contacted Iain Stenhouse, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Alaska, to lend the support of Arctic Audubon Society and Friends of Creamer's Field. He welcomed our participation and indicated that John Wright was working on the proposal. This week John and I met for a strategy session, and he agreed to keep the process active, working closely with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to obtain some essential data. I am excited about this IBA prospect and the international recognition it may bring to Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. I will keep you updated in future issues of *The Redpoll*.



## Camp Habitat Announces Summer Camp Schedule

### Pre-School Programs

June 18–22

Nature Sprouts I (Ages 4-5)

June 25–29

Nature Sprouts II (Ages 4 - 5)

### Day Camp Programs

\*designates campout group

July 9–13

Nature Detectives I (Ages 6-7)

Water Striders I\* (Ages 8-9)

July 16–20

Nature Detectives II (Ages 6-7)

Water Striders II\* (Ages 8-9)

Refuge Adventurers\* (Ages 10-11)

July 23–27

Nature Detectives III (Ages 6 - 7)

Please visit Camp Habitat on the web at [www.northern.org](http://www.northern.org) in March for more details and to register your child.

## Employment Opportunities at Camp Habitat

Join us this summer as we work with young people outdoors at Creamer's Field to cultivate their lifelong appreciation of the natural world. We're hiring Junior Counselors (high school aged) and Experienced Instructors who enjoy being outside, working with youth, and have knowledge of Alaskan natural history, flora & fauna. Contact Laenne Thompson at [laenne@northern.org](mailto:laenne@northern.org) or 452-5021 ext. 31 for more details.

## eBird Alaska to Launch in 2007

By Rich Capitan, Education Specialist, Audubon Alaska

It's winter in Alaska, and I'm looking for things to do at home—tasks that have fallen by the wayside like cleaning the garage, organizing our bookshelves, trying to write that children's book I've been meaning to do, and cleaning up my bird Lifelist. It is more challenging than it sounds; gathering hastily written field notes scribbled onto AC grocery receipts with the Bean Goose, Smew, Bramblings, and Common Greenshank that I recorded while working as a naturalist on St. Paul Island a decade ago—all stuck in my *National Geographic Bird Guide* (first edition). If you are like me, luckily there is now a place to record bird sightings in an organized fashion, that is detailed, easy to use and more importantly, your sightings can be shared with birders and researchers around the country. It also gives insight into the lives of our summer birds...where do Varied Thrushes migrate to?

In early 2007, Audubon Alaska will announce the launch of eBird Alaska, a portal to the greater eBird online database developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society. eBird provides a simple mechanism for people to record bird observations made anywhere in North America. Once entered, you can retrieve information on your sightings, from the backyard to the neighborhood to your favorite bird-watching locations, at any time for personal use. eBird also allows you to explore your observations in more ways than just printing out your lists. For instance, you can create and manage maps and graphs or create tables, using your own or all eBird observations, summarized by week, month or year. Access to the entire historical database allows you to find out what other eBird participants are reporting from across North America. In addition, you have the satisfaction of contributing to the cumulative eBird database, which may be used by birdwatchers, scientists, and conservationists to learn more about the distributions, movements, and numbers of birds across the entire continent.

More information can be found at the eBird website: [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org). You can also contact Audubon Alaska's education specialist, Rich Capitan at: [rcapitan@audubon.org](mailto:rcapitan@audubon.org) or 907-276-7034 for more information. See you on eBird Alaska!

## Galveston FeatherFest 2007

Travel to bird the Upper Texas Coast during Galveston's fifth annual celebration of nature, FeatherFest 2007, March 29-April 1. It is Upper Texas Coastal birding at its best!

FeatherFest 2007 is planned and implemented by the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council, a non profit, all volunteer organization. It helps to elevate the recognition of the values that our local natural heritage provides and help us to preserve it. More information is available at [www.galvestonfeatherfest.com](http://www.galvestonfeatherfest.com).

## Highlights from Mist Net 4

*Adopted by the Arctic Audubon Society*

In 2006, the Alaska Bird Observatory completed their 15<sup>th</sup> year of banding songbirds at the Creamer's Field Migration Station, and Arctic Audubon Society once again participated by sponsoring a net. ABO operated the station with the help of 65 volunteers, trained and supervised two interns, banded approximately 6,500 birds from April 25<sup>th</sup> through September 27<sup>th</sup>, and collaborated with the Institute of Arctic Biology at UAF and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to test for avian influenza.

The five most common species captured in 2006 were American Tree Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco, Common Redpoll and Lincoln's Sparrow. There were several days of more than 300 or 400 birds netted. A highlight was the capture of four hatch-year Tennessee Warblers, a species not known to breed in Alaska!

More than 1,700 people visited the station and attended banding demonstrations. By providing this opportunity to interact with researchers and to see birds up close, ABO hopes to pique visitor's curiosity about the natural world and foster a conservation ethic.

## Sandhill Crane Migration in Nebraska

Each spring over a half-million Sandhill Cranes congregate on Nebraska's Platte River in one of the world's greatest migration spectacles. Along with these majestic birds, thousands of birdwatchers flock to Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary near Kearney to see and hear this astounding migration display.

In conjunction with the Sandhill Crane migration, the 37th annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration, presented by Audubon Nebraska, Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, and the Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation, will be held March 16-18, 2007, in Kearney, Nebraska.

Wildlife enthusiasts from around the world travel to central Nebraska each year to participate in this weekend of field trips, presentations by nationally known environmental speakers, and more. Featured presenters include:

- Bruce Babbitt - Former U. S. Secretary of the Interior
- John Acorn - Television's *Acorn*, *The Nature Nut* as seen on Discovery Channel and Animal Planet
- Scott Hereford - Wildlife biologist, Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge
- Dr. Paul Johnsgard - Renowned Ornithologist



For a registration brochure or for more information about the Rivers and Wildlife Celebration, please visit [www.Nebraska.audubon.org](http://www.Nebraska.audubon.org). For crane viewing information, please visit [www.rowsanctuary.org](http://www.rowsanctuary.org).

*Sandhill Crane* © Ken Whitten

Mist Net 4	
Species	Total
Dark-eyed Junco	24
Yellow-rumped Warbler	9
American Tree Sparrow	8
Black-capped Chickadee	7
Swainson's Thrush	7
American Robin	4
Orange-crowned Warbler	2
Fox Sparrow	2
Savannah Sparrow	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2
Lincoln's Sparrow	2
Rusty Blackbird	1
White-crowned Sparrow	1
Yellow Warbler	1
Ruffed Grouse	1
Total	73

## Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival

May 10-13, 2007

Alaska's largest wildlife festival celebrates 15 years of great birds, great birders and great birding. This year's keynote speaker is naturalist and entertainer John Acorn. Best known as the writer and host of the how-to-be-a-naturalist TV series *Acorn*, *the Nature Nut*, he also hosts *Twits and Pishers*, the travel show for bird watchers. This year's festival will be a weekend of celebration, education and exploration for birders of all ages and abilities. Enjoy workshops, presentations, boat, kayak and bus tours, bird viewing stations, guided and unguided hikes and walks, field trips, and art and entertainment. The festival program and registration will be available in March at [www.homer.alaska.org](http://www.homer.alaska.org).

Arctic Audubon Society  
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[www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org)

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### Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

Arctic Audubon Board meeting, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 5:30 pm, Rm 300 Natural Science Facility, UAF

Costa Rica & Panama: Land of Birds and Coffee, Monday, February 12, 7:00 pm, Noel Wien Library  
Frank Keim shares travel stories and photos.

Tanana Lakes Recreation Area Public Meeting, Tuesday, February 13, 5:30 pm. Details on page 1.

King Eider Journeys in the Bering Sea, Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 pm, Alaska Bird observatory.

Great Backyard Bird Count, February 16–19  
Combine birdwatching and conservation in this “Count for the Record;” details on page 2.

### Arctic Audubon Board of Directors

email address: [arcticaudubon@netscape.net](mailto:arcticaudubon@netscape.net)

President: Gail Mayo (479-2954)

Vice President: Open

Secretary: Open

Treasurer: Gail Mayo (479-2954)

Education: Open

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](http://www.virtualbirder.com/vbirder/realbirds/index).

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \$\_\_\_\_\_ (make check payable to National Audubon Society)

Send to: Arctic Audubon Society **A52**  
PO Box 82098 **7XCH**  
Fairbanks, AK 99708

- Chapter Only Membership, \$10

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