

The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 29 Issue No. 7

May 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.

Inside...

AK Bird Conference	2
Goose Arrival Dates	3
Kanuti Refuge Plan	2
Guided Nature Walks	2
Magpie Project	3
Small Grants Awarded	2
Thank You	2

Farthest North Birdathon: May 12–June 10

Celebrate Spring and support the Arctic Audubon Society and the Alaska Bird Observatory by joining local birders for this year's Farthest North Birdathon. This is Arctic Audubon's one and only fundraising effort each year, and your participation supports our programs. You can participate by:

- gathering pledges and doing your own Birdathon,
- calling any Arctic Audubon board member to pledge support,
- make a pledge to the Youth Birdathon Team,
- join a "guided Birdathon" with Dr. Susan Sharbaugh on May 19 starting at Creamer's Field, with Sherry Lewis on May 23 at Creamer's Field, or with Gail Mayo on May 26 at Smith Lake.

Birdathon information was published in the April issue of *The Redpoll*. You can also pick up information at Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center, at the Alaska Bird Observatory, or at www.alaskabird.org. The potluck Tally Rally & Awards Ceremony will be held Sunday, July 15, 4 pm, at the Alaska Bird Observatory.

Mark your calendar for the...

Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival

Sandhill Cranes have just arrived in Fairbanks but before the next issue of our newsletter, we will be celebrating the next turn of their season with the Sandhill Crane Festival marking the beginning of their fall migration. Save the weekend of August 24, 25, and 26 to enjoy the spectacle at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Fairbanks. Crane biologist and conservation activist George Archibald will be the keynote guest and speaker. As many as 2,500 Sandhill cranes will be in attendance. Join them!

If you would enjoy helping with the festival in any of many small ways, from making a luscious dessert to guiding a nature walk, call Gail Mayo (479-2954) or Friends of Creamer's Field (452-5162).

What's Happening at Creamer's Field?

On Monday, May 21 at 7 pm at the Noel Wien Library, there will be a program about "What's Happening at Creamer's this Summer." The program includes a short slide show and information about Creamer's Field and its history, events for the summer, and volunteer opportunities. Mark your calendar for the following events:

- The 2nd Annual *Design Alaska Wild Arts Walk*, is Saturday, June 2, Noon–5 pm.
- Guided Nature Walks, held June 1–September 1, are scheduled at 10 am Monday through Friday and 7 pm on Wednesdays. Volunteers interested in leading these nature walks should come to the May 21 meeting at the Library.
- Saturday Mornings With an Artist, 10 am–Noon, begin June 1.
- A Summer Solstice Walk will be held Saturday, June 23 at 10 am.
- On June 21, Friends of Creamer's Field will have a booth at the Midnight Sun Festival in downtown Fairbanks.

Thank You!

Arctic Audubon would like to thank all of the folks that presented programs during the past year. Our thanks and applause to Barry Whitehill, Tom Paragi, Frank Keim, Audrey Taylor, Neesha Wendling, and Trish Wurtz.

Thanks to Nancy DeWitt for her assistance in producing the April newsletter.

Interior Hiking & Birding Map

For over a year, Frank Keim has been busy assembling a hiking and birding guide map for Interior Alaska. He has walked many miles to accurately assess the area's trails, access, and character. The map is now in the design stage with Compass Rose Cartography and Putt's Artistry and Design. It should be available by mid-summer. The map is a project of the Arctic Audubon Society.

Alaska Bird Conference

The 12th Biennial Alaska Bird Conference will be hosted by the Alaska Bird Observatory in Fairbanks March 4-7, 2008. Suggestions for special sessions, associated meetings, and vendors are now being accepted. Details will be posted on ABO's website, www.alaskabird.org, as they become available. For further information contact Anne Ruggles at aruggles@alaskabird.org.

Guiding Kanuti Refuge into the Future

The Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge invites public review of its revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan. The refuge conducted public scoping meetings in 2004, including a presentation to Arctic Audubon by then Acting Refuge Manager Merry Maxwell. The refuge has just completed a public review draft of the Plan that outlines proposed goals, objectives, and management alternatives for the next 15 years.

The draft Plan is available for **public comment through July 15, 2007**. This is the first management plan revision to be released for any of the eight Alaska refuges north of the Alaska Range. It is important for the public (that is YOU!) to review long range plans. This is your chance to be proactive.

The full plan will be available on-line by mid-May at <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/ccp.htm>. To obtain a copy of the plan, a plan summary, or CD, contact the planning team leader:

Peter Wikoff
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 E. Tudor Rd.
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 786-3837
email: fw7_Kanuti_planning@fws.gov

If you would like to discuss the plan before commenting, please contact Refuge Manager Mike Spindler in the Fairbanks office at (907) 456-0329. Public meetings are planned in May and June.

Small Grants Awarded

Arctic Audubon awarded two small grants this spring. One supports continuation of the Arctic Warbler study at Tangle Lakes by Alaska Bird Observatory staff and volunteers. The second grant will enable UAF graduate student Kristin DeGroot to describe and compare the physiological condition of Lesser Scaup during migration, breeding, and nesting cycles. Kristin is seeking **volunteer field assistants** who would enjoy spending up to a week during June at Long Lake in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. If you are interested, contact Mark Bertram at 456-0446 or by email at mark_bertram@fws.gov.

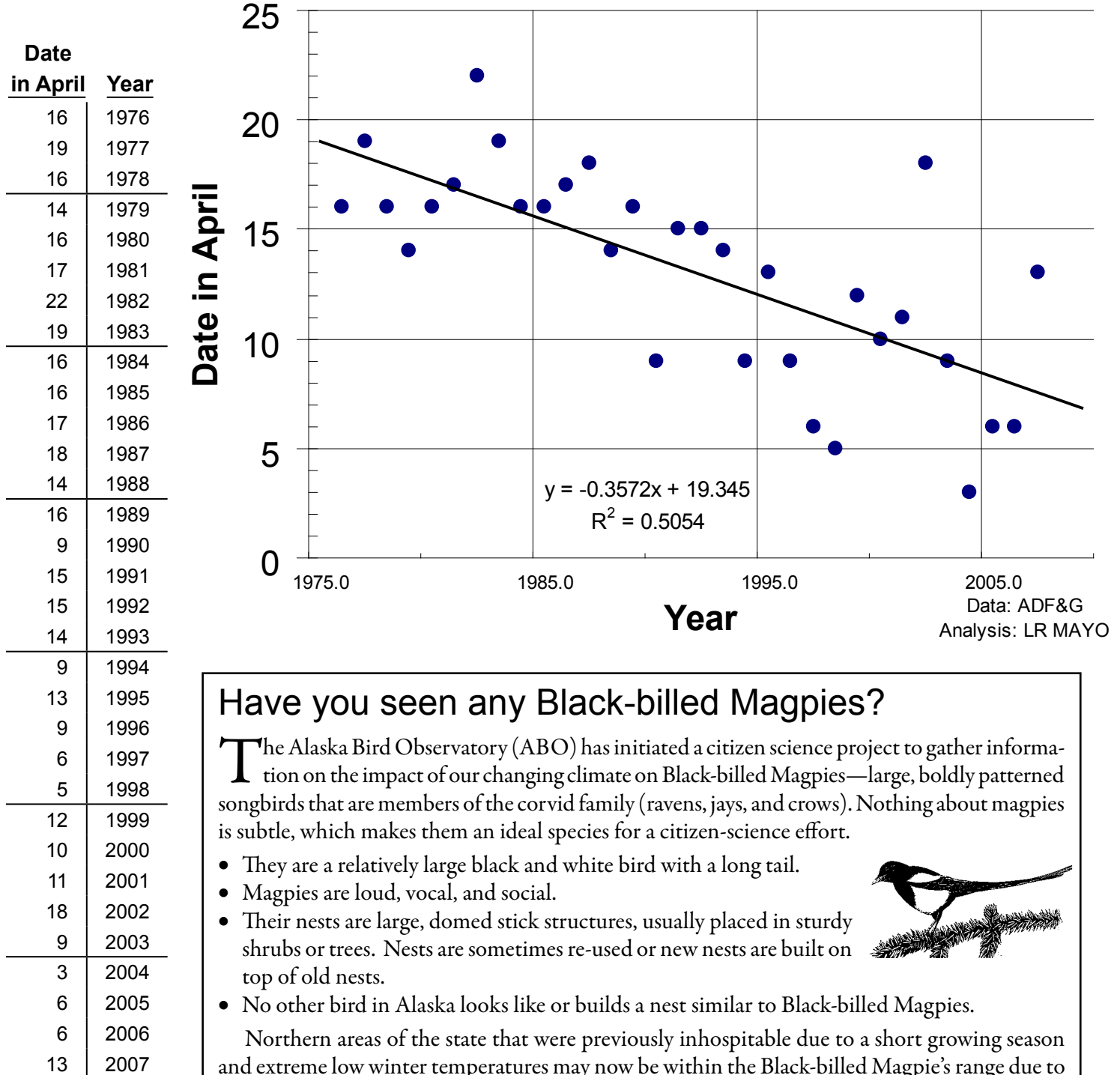
Guided Nature Walks for Tourists?

The March-April 2007 issue of *Audubon* magazine included a special advertising section about Alaska (page 34). The paragraphs about the Interior mention that Arctic Audubon Society is a good resource for learning about Alaska's birds and habitat. Jade Frank with the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau states, "They [Arctic Audubon] put together numerous nature walks and classes in birding by ear or spotting particular types of birds. They offer guided nature walks, too, which people really like."

The Audubon Board would like to explore the possibility of offering guides for visitors who prearrange via our web site. We would like to hear from members who would like to participate. This could be a pleasant diversion from all the other "must do" summer projects. If you are interested, please email us at arcticaudubon@netscape.net.

Canada Goose Migration First Arrival Date

Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Fairbanks, Alaska



Have you seen any Black-billed Magpies?

The Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) has initiated a citizen science project to gather information on the impact of our changing climate on Black-billed Magpies—large, boldly patterned songbirds that are members of the corvid family (ravens, jays, and crows). Nothing about magpies is subtle, which makes them an ideal species for a citizen-science effort.

- They are a relatively large black and white bird with a long tail.
- Magpies are loud, vocal, and social.
- Their nests are large, domed stick structures, usually placed in sturdy shrubs or trees. Nests are sometimes re-used or new nests are built on top of old nests.
- No other bird in Alaska looks like or builds a nest similar to Black-billed Magpies.



Northern areas of the state that were previously inhospitable due to a short growing season and extreme low winter temperatures may now be within the Black-billed Magpie's range due to a moderating climate. In the past five years, the number of observations of Black-billed Magpies in the Fairbanks area has increased dramatically. ABO would like to support this anecdotal evidence with a more rigorous accounting of these observations.

Sightings in all seasons are important but we are especially interested in evidence of breeding, such as young birds, adults carrying food in the spring and summer, and nests. To report a sighting, make note of the number of birds, location, date, time of day, and a short description of their behavior. Call in this information at 451-7159 or email it to birds@alaskabird.org. You can also report your sightings on our Black-billed Magpie Sighting Datasheet available on ABO's website at www.alaskabird.org.



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 Permit No. 181
 Fairbanks AK

Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

Farthest North Birdathon, May 12–June 10

Tally Rally Potluck & Awards, July 15, 4 pm

Birding By Ear Field Trip, Saturday, May 19, 9 am

Meet at Creamer’s Field for guided walk with Dave Shaw; for information, call 452-6370.

What’s Happening at Creamer’s Field, May 21, 7 pm

Public program at Noel Wien Libray; details on p. 1

Kanuti Refuge Public Comments due July 15

Public review of revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan to guide refuge for next 15 years.

Sandhill Crane Festival, August 24–26, 2007

Keynote speaker is George Archibald. Full schedule of events will be available in mid-July.

Arctic Audubon Board of Directors

email address: arcticaudubon@netscape.net

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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.

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.