

The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

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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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Important Bird Areas Program in Alaska

presentation by Dr. Iain J. Stenhouse

Tuesday, October 9, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium



The Important Bird Area (IBA) concept, first developed in Europe in the 1980s, is now recognized around the world as a valuable tool in bird conservation. IBAs are usually discrete sites that stand out from the surrounding landscape as having local, continental, or global significance for birds. The National Audubon Society launched its IBA initiative in the U.S. in 1995, establishing program's state by state. To date, 46 states have initiated IBA programs and more than 1,500 IBAs have already been identified in the U.S. With the cooperation of local experts, Audubon Alaska is currently identifying the top tier sites across the state.

This is part of an extraordinary global effort to identify areas that are vital to birds. BirdLife International, a global coalition of more than 100 country partner organizations, initiated the IBA program in Europe in the 1980's. Since then, more than 3,600 sites in 51 European countries have been identified as IBAs, with a total acreage covering 7% of Europe. Hundreds of these sites and millions of acres have received better protection as a result of the IBA Program. Today, IBAs are being identified in 156 countries around the world. By working to implement conservation strategies at these sites, we hope to minimize the effects that habitat loss and degradation have on birds and other biodiversity.

Dr. Iain Stenhouse is the Director of Bird Conservation with the Alaska State Office of the National Audubon Society. He has been involved in conservation for almost 20 years. As well as his work in Alaska, he has been involved in research on birds in the UK, Greenland, Newfoundland, and the Canadian High Arctic.



A flock of tens of thousands of Spectacled Eiders winter in the Bering Sea. Above, a Whiskered Auklet perches on a rock.
Photos courtesy of the US Fish and Wildlife Service

Arctic Audubon News

The Arctic Audubon Society will hold its annual meeting on Tuesday, October 9 at 7:00 pm in the Noel Wien Library Auditorium to elect officers for the coming year. This will be a very brief meeting prior to the presentation on Important Bird Areas in Alaska.

All members are welcome to participate. Nominations from the floor will be accepted for all positions in addition to the following candidates:

President: Gail Mayo

Vice President: Open

Secretary: Kristy McLean

Treasurer: Janet Daley

A list of Board committees and chairpersons can be found on the last page of this newsletter. If you would like to work with a delightful group of people on a variety of bird and conservation related projects, please join us! We would welcome a vice president, education chair, and help maintaining our website. If interested, contact Gail Mayo at 479-2954.

New Email Address

Arctic Audubon has a new email address, effective immediately: arcticaudubon@gmail.com.

Arctic Audubon Field Trips a Success!

by Tom Green, Field Trip Coordinator

Spring in Alaska is a wonderful time with the arrival of birds to the Interior from all over the world. Each year, Arctic Audubon sponsors three bird identification field trips to local ponds and lakes in May. We try to schedule these field trips in May to coincide with the peak migration through the Interior. Each trip is led by a local birding expert.

This year two of our trips, "Shorebird Identification" and "Waterfowl Identification," were guided by **Mark Ross**, a resident naturalist at Creamer's Field and education coordinator for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. I always find the shorebird identification rather perplexing, but Mark helped me sort out the confusion this year. We saw Solitary Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitchers, and a Red Phalarope in the seasonal ponds. **Dave Shaw** then led our "Birding by Ear" field trip, offering insights to the identification of songbirds by their calls and songs. This field trip was challenging as we listened carefully to distinguish the White-crowned from the Savannah Sparrow.

Each field trip was attended by 10-15 birding enthusiasts. Arctic Audubon thanks Mark Ross and Dave Shaw for sharing their time and knowledge with us. Arctic Audubon is currently looking to update its list of potential Field Trip Guides. If you might be interested in leading a trip, call Tom Green at 452-6370 or email at fftg@uaf.edu.



In August, Dr. George Archibald led a crane walk at Creamer's Field.

Photo by Tom Green

Next Month is Thanksgiving Bird Count

by Dr. John G. Hewston, Humboldt State University

Thanksgiving Bird Count takes place on Thanksgiving Day and lasts only one hour. The counter chooses the time of day that best fits into his/her holiday schedule. Count instructions and a count form can be found on page five of this newsletter. Started in 1966 by Dr. Ernest Edwards in Virginia, Dr. John Hewston of Humboldt State University has been coordinating and compiling this count in the West since 1992.

Last year 401 counts were received from the eleven Western States and Alaska. Counters tallied 141 different bird species inside their circles at count time. The usual three were tops again. Number one was the House Sparrow (1,991) for the eighth year in a row. In second spot again was the Dark-eyed Junco (1,941), and the House Finch was third (1,930). The rest of the top ten were (in order) Black-capped Chickadee, American Goldfinch, California Quail, Mourning Dove, Steller's Jay, White-crowned Sparrow, and Common Redpoll. This last one is a surprise. Although reported from only three states, the Common Redpoll was the most abundant species in Alaska and also seen in Montana and Colorado.

Mark your calendar...

Community Events

Winter Birds Family Program

Saturday, October 13, 9:00 am–Noon
UA Museum of the North

For ages 7-12 with an adult. \$15 per child/adult pair (preregistration required). Discover the secrets to winter survival for birds. Learn about Alaska's resident birds and follow the journeys of those that migrate to warmer climates.

Winter Bird Feeding Workshop

Saturday, October 13, 10:00 am–Noon
Alaska Feed Company; \$10 (\$5 for ABO members)

Learn how to identify those feeder visitors and how to attract birds to your feeding station. Coupons for bird feeding supplies will be available to participants and door prizes will be awarded! Information at 451-7059 or www.alaskabird.org.

Far North Conservation Film Festival

Sunday, November 4, 3–9:00 pm
Pioneer Park; free admission

The 2007 Far North Conservation Film Festival will highlight a series of films on the conservation and sustainability of wildlife, wild places, and cultures around the world. A new film on Gates of the Arctic National Park will headline the event. This year's Festival will kick-off with film teasers on **First Friday, November 2nd** at the Alaska Public Lands Information Center from 5–8:00 pm. For more information, call 456-0527 or visit www.farnorthfilms.com.

“Creepy Critters” with Friends of Creamer’s Field

Saturday, October 27, 12–4:00 pm
Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center

Bring the kids to the annual Creepy Critters program and learn about ravens through educational activities and crafts at the Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center. A \$3 donation is suggested. Call 452-5162 for more information.

Birds of the Aleutians

Thursday, November 15, 7:00 pm
UA Museum of the North

Co-authors of *Birds of the Aleutian Islands, Alaska* Dan Gibson and G. Vernon Byrd will talk about species diversity in these remote islands and share images of these rarely-seen birds. Book signing will follow the lecture. Free admission.

Fairbanks FeederCount

November 17, December 15, March 1

Count the birds at your feeder on three Saturdays this winter to help monitor resident birds. More information can be found at www.alaskabird.org.

Fourth Annual conference...

Bioneers in Alaska

October 19-21

Alaska Pacific University, Anchorage

Bioneers in Alaska: Creating Sustainable Communities is an annual conference that brings Alaskans together to explore practical solutions for restoring our environment and revitalizing communities.

This year's *Bioneers in Alaska* conference will be one of 20 concurrent events throughout North America, all participating via satellite in plenary sessions from the main conference in California. In addition, *Bioneers in Alaska* will feature its own keynote speakers and dozens of workshops.

Keynote speakers in Anchorage are Catherine Austin Fitts, founder and president of Solari Inc., and Andy Lipkis, founder of TreePeople in Los Angeles.

More information is available at www.sustainak.org or 907-373-0909.

Alaska Trails Seeks Executive Director

Alaska Trails, a statewide, nonprofit trails advocacy group, is advertising for an executive director. A complete job description is on the Alaska Trails website, www.alaska-trails.org, or available by mail. Interested candidates may submit a letter of interest, a resumé, and salary requirements by September 28, 2007 to Alaska Trails, P.O. Box 140264, Anchorage, AK 99514 or office@alaska-trails.org.

Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 29th

Volunteers should call Gail Mayo, 479-2954.

2007 Farthest North Birdathon Nets Fun & Funds

Between May 12th and June 10th, 57 people went out to count birds for a cause and raise money for Arctic Audubon Society and the Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) as part of the Farthest North Birdathon. Almost \$14,000 has been raised in this year's Birdathon.

Jim DeWitt was our top individual money raiser by collecting \$2,235 in pledges. Close behind Jim, was Carol McIntyre with \$1,185 turned in. The Pilsner-Powered Pedal Pushers (Carol McIntyre, Ray Hander, Chris Harwood, and Steve Kendall), raised the most money by a team overall with \$3,465, however they were unable to participate without using fossil fuels as has been their tradition. The weather, described by them as "fog, drizzle, light rain, rain, heavy rain, and horizontal rain," forced them inside a vehicle for their historical route around Fairbanks where they counted 80 species.

"Shrike Three," a team comprised of ABO board members Philip Martin, Bob Ritchie, and Ted Swem, earned the coveted "Golden Binoculars" award for the most species seen (or heard) in a 24 hour period with 88 species on a route from Fairbanks to Delta Junction.

The Dogtrot Expedition, made up of ABO executive director Anne Ruggles, Don Hampton, and their two Irish setters, won the prize for most money raised while not using fossil fuels by raising \$885. They identified 37 species while trekking around Ester Dome.

We would like to extend a big thank you to all of this year's counters and those who pledged them, Wildlife and Wood for sponsoring the evening guided birdathon walk with Sherry Lewis, and our event sponsors: Steve Neumuth Advertising, Yukon Title Company, and Alaska Airlines. We would also like to thank Sherry Lewis, Philip Martin, Gail Mayo, Susan Sharbaugh, and Mary Teel for leading birders on counts. A round of applause is due for Mark Ross for providing the artwork for our travel mug prize and for Trademark Screenprinters for donating the art setup fee. Finally, a standing ovation is in order for Prunella Pinfeather aka Shirley Hughes for inspiring people to "grab their binoculars and head on out!"

Birdathon Haiku

by Sherry Lewis

Longspurs fly as one

Large flock swirling in the field

One species on list.

Birdathon Prizes Awarded

Most Money Raised:

Individual: Jim DeWitt (\$2,235), Carol McIntyre (\$1,185), Ray Hander (\$1,000), Nancy DeWitt (\$1,074), Anne Ruggles (\$885), Steve Kendall (\$785), Sherry Lewis (\$761), and Frank Keim (\$610).

Team (based on average/person): Beringia Boneyard Birders (Jim & Nancy DeWitt) \$1,654.50

Family: Jim & Nancy DeWitt (\$3,309)

Youth: Payton & Blayke Rifley (\$270)

Most Species Seen in Alaska:

88 by "Shrike Three" (Philip Martin, Bob Ritchie, and Ted Swem)

Most Environmentally Friendly Teams:

Bird Dogs (Jeanette Moore & family)- 47 species in their yard;

Dogtrot Expedition (Anne Ruggles, Don Hampton, and two Irish Setters)- 37 species around Ester Dome.

Best Team Name:

Adult Guided Birdathon (Kathy Campbell, DeeDee Hammond, Clare Hill, Michael McCann, Linda Mellman, Jack Rasmussen, Deb Ryan, Susan Sharbaugh, and Paulette Wille)

Winner of Alaska Airlines tickets:

Ray Hander

Winner of Zeiss Binoculars:

Jim DeWitt

Other Valued Counters:

Laurel Devaney, Ken Russell, Sally & Joe Galbraith, Fairbanks Kiwanis Club, Max & Gracia Lewis, Sue Guers, Matt Timpf, April Harding, Karen Jensen, Helen Sudkamp-Walker, Stan Justice, Dave Shaw, Ruth Jolly Knapman, Tim Walker, Tricia Blake, Odessa Bogusch, Betty Connor, Chris Villano, Debbie Moses, Eric Enlow, John Maloney, Joyce Bateman, Julie Pinkowski, Linda Bruemmer, Lou Carufel, Marilyn Askelin, Mark Simon, Matt Emslie, Merritt Helfferich, Pete Tracy, Rosy Lim, Siri Tuttle, Carrie Dershin, and Sharon Baring.

Special Thanks to our Prize Donors:

American Birding Association, Marty Baldridge, Beaver Sports, Hot Licks Ice Cream, Ivory Jacks, Patagonia, Princess Tours, Sourdough Fuel, Stan Stephens Cruises, and the Turtle Club.



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

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Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

Important Bird Areas in Alaska, Tuesday, Oct. 9th, 7 pm, Noel Wien Library.

Presentation by Iain Stenhouse, Audubon Alaska.

Bioneers in Alaska Conference, October 19-21, Alaska Pacific University. Details on page 3.

Winter Bird Feeding Workshop, Saturday, Oct. 13th, 10 am–Noon, Alaska Feed Company.

Arctic Audubon Board Meeting, Tuesday, October 30th, 5:30 pm, Rm 300 Reichardt Building at UAF.

All members are welcome at this business meeting.

Far North Conservation Film Festival, Sunday, November 4th, 3–9:00 pm, Pioneer Park

Arctic Audubon Program, Monday, Nov. 5th, 7 pm, Noel Wien Library. Topic to be announced.

Arctic Audubon Board of Directors

email address: arcticaudubon@gmail.com

President: Gail Mayo (479-2954)

Vice President: Open

Secretary: Kristi McLean (479-4874)

Treasurer: Janet Daley (457-1583)

Education: Open

Conservation: Kristi McLean (479-4874)

Hospitality: Brook Gamble (456-3775)

Programs: Lauren Attanas (474-9736)

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.

**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.