

# The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 30 Issue No. 4

February 2008



*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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## An East African Adventure—Birds, Wildlife, People

*presentation by Ken Whitten & Ron Teel*

Monday, February 11, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

Last March, a group of Alaskans and friends went on safari to Kenya and Tanzania. Ken Whitten and Ron Teel will share photos and stories about several parks and wildlife areas, including the Serengeti at the peak of the Great Migration. Other highlights include elephants of Samburu and Manyara, millions of flamingos at Lake Nakuru, Ngorongo Crater, spectacular scenery, colorful birds both large and small, great cats, and Native peoples still living traditional lifestyles. We stayed in a variety of lodges, private ranches, and remote mobile tented camps. Lions, cheetahs, jackals, hyenas, wild dogs, giraffes, zebras, rhinos, gazelles, elands, baboons, monkeys. Samburu, Pokot, Njemps, and Masai villagers. Eagles, Bee-eaters, Weavers, Vultures, Cranes, Ostriches. Hornbills, Sunbirds, Parrots, Lovebirds, and much more.



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*Ken Whitten, retired biologist, and Ron Teel, dentist, are both avid photographers and bird watchers. Ken is already planning his next trip to Africa in 2009.*

*Above, Scarlet-chested Sunbird; at left, driving through the Serengeti migration.*

*photos by Ken Whitten*

## Upcoming Events

### Winter Farm Pond/Field Party at Creamer's Field, Saturday, February 16, Noon–4 pm

The field pond closest to the Farmhouse Visitor Center will be cleared for ice skating and folks can ski or snowshoe, or build snowmen in the fields. Hot drinks will be available in the Farmhouse. Families welcome. Call 452-5162 for more information.

### 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Backyard Bird Count, February 15–18

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are. For more information on how to participate, including identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps, and information on over 500 bird species, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

### 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Alaska Bird Conference, March 3–7 at the Westmark Fairbanks Hotel

The Alaska Bird Conference offers something for everyone and features special guest Scott Weidensaul! There are several free, public events and a special community rate people who are not professional biologists. Details on page 4.

## Arctic Audubon Society Offers Small Grants

Applications due March 15, 2008

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. This year, 2008, will be our fifth year of offering small grants.

In 2008, Arctic Audubon will consider applications for small grants of up to \$2,000. Projects should enhance the understanding and conservation of northern Alaska's organisms and/or ecosystems. Projects dedicated to increasing public awareness and knowledge of conservation issues are appropriate, as are projects that develop educational tools. All applications will be considered and responded to. High school and middle school students and organizations are encouraged to apply. Partial funding may be offered to several applicants.

Applicants should submit:

1. one page cover letter introducing themselves, including contact information
2. one page description of the project, including budget and timeline for completion.
3. additional information is optional.

Applications are due March 15, 2008. Email to [arcticaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:arcticaudubon@gmail.com) or submit by mail to Arctic Audubon, PO Box 82098, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708.

Successful recipients will be expected to submit a report of outcomes and be willing to give a short presentation on the project (if requested).

For information about the Arctic Audubon Society, please visit our website at [www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org). Direct questions and submit all materials to [arcticaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:arcticaudubon@gmail.com).

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.

## Christmas Bird Count Rewards

Once again local bird counters were rewarded with pleasant weather (as winter weather goes) for the 47<sup>th</sup> Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count. A little sun was seen along with 5,773 birds! The day was capped with a delicious potluck dinner at the Girl Scout Hall. Thank you to all participants for bringing a great array of food and efficiency in compiling results. The area coordinators deserve great rewards for getting 42 parties (60 individuals) out into the field and gathering numbers from 28 feeder watchers. Thanks to Andrea Swingley and Pam Bruce who stepped in to help on short notice and to the area regulars who continue to build up their counting corps. Thank you Philip Martin, Tom Green, Ken Russell and Laurel Devaney, Mark Ross and Melissa Sikes, Jamie and Bud Marschner, and Joyce Potter. Jim DeWitt did a great job entering count data on the computer, so we could enjoy preliminary results on the spot, and formatting the final results that are available on our website (click on the "Christmas Bird Count" button).

The total number of birds seen could be considered a reward; no one had to deal with hoards of Redpolls this season. Fewer Redpolls were seen in 2003 (728) and an almost equal number was seen in 2005 (1,682). It looks as if early season Redpolls are returning to a pattern of alternate years of high and low numbers. Large numbers of Bohemian Waxwings and Mallards topped previous high counts for those two species. Large numbers of Boreal and Black-capped Chickadees approached but did not top previous count numbers. The Raven count, a topic for lively discussion at the compilation potluck was fairly consistent with past Raven counts, hopefully reflecting increasing consistency on our part.

The big reward of the 2007 count was the unusual species seen. The most spectacular was the Townsend's Solitaire seen at the DeWitt's feeder previous to count day and also on count day. Amazingly another Solitaire was seen a few miles away at close to the same time. Tim Mowry highlighted this somewhat out of place bird in his feature story in the *Fairbanks Daily News Miner*. Thanks, Tim. And equally spectacular were the two new species added to our 47 years of counting, a Peregrine Falcon and a Barrow's Goldeneye. We can undoubtedly thank the Mallards for the falcon and for another bird new to our count seen during count week, a Bald Eagle. That makes three species new to our count. A Townsend's Solitaire was seen during count week way back in 1976.

Many thanks to all Fairbanks counters for continuing to develop consistency in how we each get out and count our small areas. This isn't easy when the individual rewards seem meager, that is unless you happen to see a Townsend's Solitaire, or a Peregrine Falcon, or who knows what might turn up.

Thanks to all for getting out and enjoying the day!

## 2008 Alaska Bird Conference

The Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) is hosting the 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Alaska Bird Conference March 3–7 at the Westmark Fairbanks Hotel. In addition to over 70 presentations on avian research, management, environmental education and conservation, the conference will feature a variety of programs for anyone with an interest in birds. The full conference schedule is available at [www.alaskabird.org/ABOAKBirdConferenceHome.html](http://www.alaskabird.org/ABOAKBirdConferenceHome.html) or call ABO at 451-7159 for more information. Conference highlights include the following:

### Presentations by featured speaker Scott Weidensaul

Internationally recognized author Scott Weidensaul will give two presentations in the Westmark Gold Room:

- **March 4<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** – “Living on the Wind: The World of Migratory Birds.” This free program is open to the general public.
- **March 6<sup>th</sup>** – “Return to Wild America: A Yearlong Search for the Continent’s Soul” retraces the epic journey of Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher’s 1954 legendary birding trip across North America. This keynote address will be given at the conference banquet, which starts at 6:30 pm. Advance tickets required: \$35 (\$20/student).

Mr. Weidensaul has written more than two dozen books on natural history. ABO will be selling his books during the conference, which you can have signed by the author.

### Bird Education Materials Resource Fair, March 4<sup>th</sup>

A free Bird Education Materials Resource Fair will take place on March 4<sup>th</sup> between 3:30 and 6:30 pm at the Westmark Hotel. A wide variety of kits, posters, activities and other education materials from state and national bird education programs will be on display, along with information on feeder counts and citizen science programs. Bird education experts from across the state will also be available to talk to teachers and other educators about their programs.

### Art Show, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm

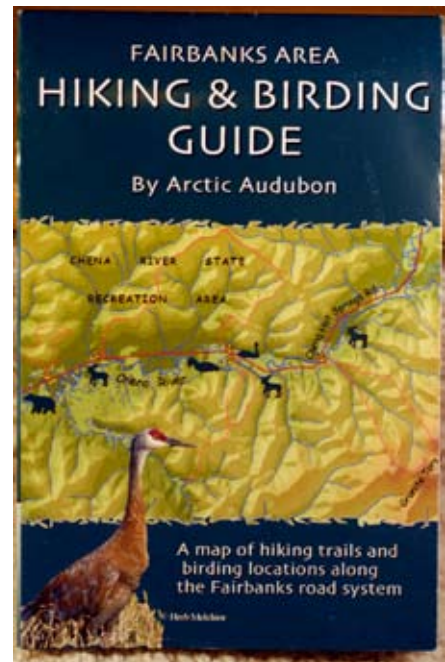
The art show, “In Celebration of Alaska’s Birds,” will showcase the work of more than 20 local artists who share a passion for birds. The art show will be held concurrently with the conference poster session, and both events are free to the public.

### Special Community Conference Rate

To encourage attendance at the conference science program by the general public, ABO is offering a **special community rate** of \$10/day for people who are not professional biologists. This will provide entrance to the oral presentations without the usual conference perks (abstract booklet, refreshments, hors d’oeuvres buffet at the poster session, etc.). The regular fee is \$50/day, or \$140 for all three days.

### ABO Seeks Book Donations

ABO is looking for donations of old, rare or valuable ornithology books for a silent auction during the Alaska Bird Conference banquet on March 6. Auction proceeds will support ABO’s education programs. If you can help, please call Nicole at 451-7159.



## Hiking & Birding Map Now Available

Produced by the Arctic Audubon Society, the *Fairbanks Area Hiking & Birding Guide* is a 23-by-35-inch fold out map showing the locations of 35 popular hiking and birding spots that are easy to access and on public land.

- The map includes a guide to the many species of birds in the area.
- The reverse side of the map includes detailed information on each trail.
- The map is available folded (6” x 9”) or unfolded (23” x 35”)

The map is sold for \$12 at the following local outlets: Alaska Bird Observatory Education Center, Friends of Creamer’s Field Farmhouse Visitor Center, Gulliver’s Books, Beaver Sports, and Geophysical Institute Map Office.

To order by mail for \$13 (folded only), contact Arctic Audubon at:

[arcticaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:arcticaudubon@gmail.com)

Arctic Audubon Society  
PO Box 82098  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99708

or by calling Frank Keim, 451-9308 or Gail Mayo, 479-2954



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[www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org)

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Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

**An East African Adventure, Monday, February 11,**  
 7:00 pm, Noel Wien Library Auditorium  
 Photos and stories by Ken Whitten & Ron Teel  
**11<sup>th</sup> Great Backyard Bird Count, Feb. 15-18**  
 Details at <http://www.birdcount.org>  
**Winter Farm Pond/Field Party at Creamer's Field,**  
 February 16, 12–4 pm. Information: 452-5162  
**Bird Stories, Myths & Legends, Wednesday,**  
 February 20, 7:00 pm, Alaska Bird Observatory  
**Fairbanks Feeder Count, Saturday, March 1**  
 Final day of the annual count of birds visiting your  
 feeders. Information at [www.alaskabird.org](http://www.alaskabird.org)  
**Alaska Bird Conference, March 3-7, 2008**  
 Details on page 4

**Arctic Audubon Board of Directors**

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**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.