

# The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 30 Issue No. 5

March 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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## China's Tibetan Plateau

*presentation by Milo Burcham*

Monday, March 3, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

Milo Burcham will present images captured on two trips to China's Tibetan Plateau, one with BBC while filming for the *Planet Earth* television series. The program will feature the little known wildlife adapted to this high and cold plateau. With most of China suffering from a growing human population, the Tibetan Plateau remains one of the wildest places on earth. Featured will be the black-lipped pika, a keystone species, as well as the local people, trip logistics, and conservation concerns for the region.



*Milo Burcham is a wildlife biologist and photographer living in Cordova, Alaska. He has photographed wildlife for over 20 years and has had images published in National Geographic, Audubon, Ranger Rick, and many other publications. He is president of the Prince William Sound Audubon Chapter, and his images have appeared on many of Alaska Audubon's publications.*

Photos: Tibetan Fox above, Wild Yak at left.

## Living on the Wind: The World of Migratory Birds

*presentation by Scott Weidensaul*

Tuesday, March 4, 7:00 pm

Fairbanks Westmark Hotel

Join naturalist and author Scott Weidensaul on an exploration of how and why birds migrate, and the conservation challenges that face them, based on his book, *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*. The program ranges from the doorstep of the Aleutians in Alaska, and the frozen edge of Hudson Bay in Canada, through the rainforests of Central and South America to the grassy pampas of Argentina, and is filled with the drama and sweep of this remarkable phenomenon. This program is free and open to the public.



## Audubon-Riedel Nature Reserve Field Trip

Come tour the Audubon-Riedel Nature Reserve property near 5 Mile Chena Hot Springs Road on **Saturday, March 8, 9:00 am**. Meet at Creamer's Field Farmhouse parking lot at 9:00 am to carpool. Bring a lunch or snack, binoculars, and snowshoes or cross-country skis if you have them. Dress warmly! The hike/ski will last 2-3 hours. We'll look for birds and animal tracks. Directions will be provided. Contact Tom Green for more information at 452-6370 (home) or email at [fftkg@uaf.edu](mailto:fftkg@uaf.edu).

## Arctic Audubon Field Trips

### Nature Reserve Tour

**March 8** Field Trip to Audubon-Riedel Nature Reserve

Come tour the Audubon-Riedel Nature Reserve property near 5 Mile Chena Hot Springs Road on **Saturday, March 8, 9:00 am**. Meet at Creamer's Field Farmhouse parking lot at 9:00 am to carpool. Details on page one.

### Spring Birding Field Trips

**May 10** Waterfowl identification

**May 17** Shorebird identification

**May 24** Birding by Ear and Songbird identification.

Arctic Audubon is sponsoring a series of three birding trips in May, all led by birding experts from the Fairbanks area. All field trips meet at **Creamer's Field Farmhouse** at **9:00 am** and usually last until noon. Bring binoculars, a snack, and rubber boots if you have them. If you have a spotting scope, that would be great! We'll visit Creamer's Field ponds first, and then carpool to the South Cushman lakes, and perhaps the airport ponds. Children are especially welcome.

For more information about field trips, contact Tom Green, 452-6370 or [fftkg@uaf.edu](mailto:fftkg@uaf.edu).

## A Week for Birds, Biologists & Birders!

March 3–7 at the Westmark Fairbanks Hotel

The 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Alaska Bird Conference is a fabulous opportunity for birders of all levels—from the occasional birdwatcher to the professional biologist and everything in between. The public is invited to events listed below. The conference schedule and registration information is available at [www.alaskabird.org/ABOAKBirdConferenceHome.html](http://www.alaskabird.org/ABOAKBirdConferenceHome.html) or by calling the Alaska Bird Observatory at 451-7159.

### **Special Community Conference Rate, \$20**

Interested folks that are *not* professional biologists are welcome to attend the conference at a special community rate of \$20. This provides entrance to the oral presentations without the usual conference perks (abstract booklet, refreshments, etc.). Advance registration is not required, just show up at the conference!

### **Banquet & Keynote Address, Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 6:30–9:00 pm**

Tickets are available for the general public to attend the conference banquet with keynote address by Scott Weidensaul, "Return to Wild America: A Yearlong Search for the Continent's Soul." In 1955, naturalists Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher published their best selling book *Wild America*, chronicling a now-legendary 30,000-mile trip across North America. Fifty years later, author Scott Weidensaul retraced their epic journey, to see what we've gained and lost, and to catch a glimpse of what the future holds for wildlife and wild lands.

Tickets cost \$35/person and must be purchased by March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Contact ABO at 451-7159.

## Don't Miss These Free Public Events

### **Resource Fair, Tuesday March 4<sup>th</sup>, 3:30–6:30 pm**

Stop by the Westmark on Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> between 3:30 and 6:30 pm to browse the Bird Education Materials Resource Fair. A wide variety of kits, posters, activities and other 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. Stay around for the program at 7:00 pm by Scott Weidensaul.

### **"Living on the Wind: The World of Migratory Birds," a presentation by Scott Weidensaul, Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm**

See program description on page one. Author and naturalist Scott Weidensaul has written more than two dozen books on natural history. He lectures widely on wildlife and environmental topics, and is an active field researcher, specializing in birds of prey and hummingbirds.

### **Art Show & Poster Session, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 7–8:30 pm**

Alaska is home to an incredible diversity of birds and an equally impressive variety of artists who express the beauty of birds through their creations. "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.

## Proposed Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange

Public Comments Due by March 10

by Gail Mayo

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is considering a land exchange in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge with Doyon Limited, an Alaska Native regional corporation. Doyon is also the largest private landholder within the Refuge. Doyon is interested in Refuge lands that **may** hold oil and gas resources. Both Doyon and the Refuge staff have been studying this exchange and gathering facts and opinions since 2004. The draft Environmental Impact Statement recently released is up for public comment until March 10, 2008.

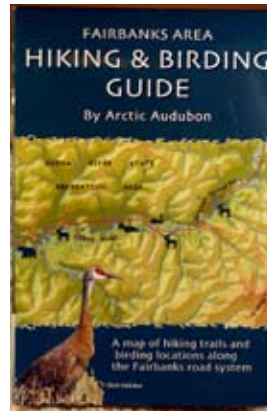
Arctic Audubon has several concerns with this exchange. We are working on our response and welcome hearing from our members. Call any board member.

Our concerns are:

1. Any time oil and gas exploration and/or development are being considered there will be degradation of the land, from exploration activities (minimal) to possible development activities requiring gravel extraction, roads and gravel pads, buildings, etc.
2. The above activities will destroy the continuity of the present wildlands.
3. Wherever there is industrial development there is potential for accidental pollution.
4. The proposed areas of exchange include the White-Crazy Mountain area which has been proposed for wilderness status.
5. The inevitable road into the main area of exchange would be in the adjacent White Mountains National Recreation Area, or nearby to the west.

USFWS offers several alternatives for the proposed land exchange. One of these is Alternative 3, No Action. Arctic Audubon Society plans to urge that this be the chosen alternative. We urge you to express your opinion as well. The Refuge would gain up to 2% of its present acreage and possible funds which could be used for land purchases for Alaskan wildlife refuges. We think these benefits are outweighed by the losses that would be incurred.

Access summaries of the issues and other information online at [yukonflatseis.ensr.com](http://yukonflatseis.ensr.com) or send comments to **Yukon Flats EIS Project Office c/o ENSR, 1835 South Bragaw Street, Suite 490, Anchorage, Alaska 99508** by March 10, 2008.



*The Fairbanks Area Hiking & Birding Guide is sold for \$12 at the Alaska Bird Observatory Education Center, Beaver Sports, Friends of Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center, Geophysical Institute Map Office, and Gulliver's Books.*

## Applications for Arctic Audubon's Small Grants Due March 15, 2008

Details are available at our website, [www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org), in the February issue of our newsletter and on the "small grants" page. Direct questions and submit all materials to [arcticaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:arcticaudubon@gmail.com).

## Friends of Creamer's Field Upcoming Events

### Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm, Owl Program

Please join Friends of Creamer's Field at the Noel Wien Library for an evening talk and slide show by Ted Swem and Nancy DeWitt about the ecology of our local owls, how to find them and identify their calls. Live owl will be present if temperature permits.

### Saturday, March 22, 1-3 pm, Equinox Walk

Join Friends of Creamer's Field for a Spring Equinox Walk on the Refuge trails. Look for the elusive ptarmigan and grouse. Meet at the Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center, 1300 College Road.

### Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, Noon-4 pm

Annual Spring Migration Celebration at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge.

For more information about these events, contact Friends of Creamer's Field, 452-5162.



Arctic Audubon Society  
 PO Box 82098  
 Fairbanks, AK 99708  
[www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org)

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Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

- China’s Tibetan Plateau, Monday, March 3, 7 pm**  
 Milo Burcham will present images from two trips to China’s Tibetan Plateau at Noel Wien Library.
- Living on the Wind: The World of Migratory Birds Tuesday, March 4, 7:00 pm, Westmark Hotel**  
 Public presentation by Scott Weidensaul.
- Alaska Bird Conference, March 3–7, Westmark Hotel**  
 Details on page two and at [www.alaskabird.org](http://www.alaskabird.org).
- Audubon Field Trip, Saturday, March 8, 9:00 am**  
 tour the Audubon-Riedel Nature Reserve property near 5 Mile Chena Hot Springs Rd; details page 2.
- Arctic Audubon Small Grant Applications due by March 15<sup>th</sup>** Details at [www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org).
- Yukon Flats Comments Due March 10.** See page 3.

**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.