

The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 31 Issue No. 3

www.arcticaudubon.org

December 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.

Inside...

ABO Raffle	5
Beak Deformity Alert	5
CBC Species List	2
Chena River Ducks	2
Christmas Bird Count ...	3-4
Crane Field Trip	2
Mist Net 4 Results	5
Tanana Lakes Update	5

Arctic Audubon Society Presents...

Bird ID Program: Birds of the Boreal Winter

Monday, December 15th, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

Get ready for the Christmas Bird Count with Alaska Bird Observatory Research Biologist David Shaw at a slide presentation on the hardy birds that survive the cold winters in interior Alaska. There are more than chickadees! In this talk, Dave will address where to find and how to identify the two dozen or so species that can be found around Fairbanks during the winter months.



Boreal Chickadee
by David Shaw

Christmas Bird Count: A Holiday Tradition

Saturday, December 27th



By Saturday, December 27th you'll need a break from too much indoor holiday festivity. Join us and enjoy the winter birds for fun and for science during the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This year is the 109th count for the continent and the 48th count for Fairbanks. Our count has certainly grown over the years, yet some of the same people who gathered for the first CBC are still counting. It is amazing that over the years Fairbank's birders' sharp eyes have found 68 different species alive in the "dead of winter." See the complete list on page 2. We welcome you to join in and discover the enjoyment from a day outside helping to build a database of information on bird population trends unmatched by any other wildlife census. See pages 3 and 4 for more information.

Changing Climate for Arctic Refuge Protection

Monday, January 12th, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

Arctic expert Pamela A. Miller will talk about the wildlife, wilderness, and cultural values of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and how global climate change presents new challenges to this remarkable wild land and its inhabitants. Preserving Alaska's wild places is an important part of America's clean energy economy as we address the global climate crisis. Fairbanksans will again be key in the effort to permanently protect the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge as well as other special places in America's Arctic. Pam will give a sneak preview of the opportunities for citizen action to protect this special place during President Obama's administration.



Polar bear in the Arctic Refuge
photo by Ken Whitten

Pam Miller is the Arctic Program Director for the Northern Alaska Environmental Center and former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist who studied tundra birds on the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge and cumulative impacts of the North Slope oil fields. She chaired the Alaska Coalition in the mid-1990's for protection of the refuge, and worked for The Wilderness Society and had a wilderness guiding business for about a decade.



Members in the News

Marv and Becky Hassebroek have been feeding the ducks that overwinter in the Chena River below the power plant's warm water discharge area. They have formed a nonprofit association called Feed the Ducks for any that would like to contribute to their efforts. They would also love to have help with the daily feeding chore. If interested call them at 456-3066.

Above, a Mallard lands on the snowy river bank.
Photo by Ken Whitten

Email Delivery of Newsletter

E-Delivery of Arctic Audubon's newsletter, *The Redpoll*, is now an option. Contact the newsletter editor at zalar@alaska.net to receive your newsletter via email instead of by postal delivery.

Hiking & Birding Map



The Fairbanks Area Hiking & Birding Guide is sold in Fairbanks 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. Maps can be ordered via email at arcticaudubon@gmail.com.

Alaska eBird

<http://ebird.org/content/ak/>

Alaska ebird is a great way to record your observations, manage your life list, and help contribute to avian monitoring and conservation in Alaska. Visit the website, <http://ebird.org/content/ak/>

Crane Viewing Field Trip to Nebraska

Friends of Creamer's Field Director Melissa Sikes has been invited to speak at the Rivers and Wildlife Celebration, March 20–22, 2009 in Kearney, Nebraska. This is a great opportunity to organize a field trip for interested Fairbanksans that would like to view cranes together along the Platte River.

In 2006, Nebraska author and photographer Michael Forsberg was the keynote speaker at the Tanana Valley Crane Festival.

His words and photos presented an enticing image of the Platte River during spring migration when millions of birds stop there on their way north.

The Rivers and Wildlife Celebration is held each March to celebrate the annual migration of 500,000 Sandhill Cranes and millions of waterfowl through central Nebraska. For more information, visit the Audubon Nebraska website at www.nebraska.audubon.org/RWC-generic.htm and the Rowe Sanctuary website at www.rowesanctuary.org.

Conference registration materials will be available in mid-December. Because of the popularity of this event, reservations must be made early to guarantee viewing time in the blinds and participation in conference events. Contact Mary Zalar, 479-4547 or zalar@alaska.net, or Melissa Sikes, 452-5162 or creamers@ptialaska.net, if you are interested.



Sandhill Cranes land at Creamer's Field.
Photo by Ken Whitten

Species Seen on One or More Fairbanks Christmas Bird Counts 1965–2007 (x1968)

Source: www.audubon.org

Gadwall	Gyr Falcon	Golden-crowned Kinglet
American Widgeon	Peregrine Falcon	Townsend's Solitaire
Mallard	American Coot	American Robin
Northern Shoveler	Rock Pigeon	Varied Thrush
Pintail	Great Horned Owl	European Starling
Lesser Scaup	Snowy Owl	Bohemian Waxwing
Harlequin Duck	Northern Hawk Owl	American Tree Sparrow
White-winged Scoter	Great Grey Owl	Savannah Sparrow
Bufflehead	Boreal Owl	Fox Sparrow
Common Goldeneye	Downy Woodpecker	Lincoln's Sparrow
Barrow's Goldeneye	Hairy Woodpecker	White-crowned Sparrow
Common Merganser	American Three-toed Woodpecker	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Red-breasted Merganser	Black-backed Woodpecker	Dark-eyed Junco
Ring-necked Pheasant	Northern Shrike	Rustic Bunting
Ruffed Grouse	Gray Jay	Snow Bunting
Spruce Grouse	Black-billed Magpie	Rusty Blackbird
Willow Ptarmigan	Common Raven	Gray-crowned Rosy Finch
Rock Ptarmigan	Black-capped Chickadee	Pine Grosbeak
Sharp-tailed Grouse	Boreal Chickadee	White-winged Crossbill
Bald Eagle	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Common Redpoll
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Brown Creeper	Hoary Redpoll
Northern Goshawk	American Dipper	Pine Siskin
Merlin		Siberian Tit

48TH ANNUAL FAIRBANKS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 27th, 2008

Compilation Potluck dinner at 5:00 pm at the Kunkel Community Center

Please contact the coordinator of the area in which you want to count as soon as possible. If you have no preference, or can't reach your coordinator, contact Gail Mayo, 479-2954 or mayogail@gmail.com

West Goldstream

Brian Lawhead
455-6849

lawhead@mosquitonet.com

University

Gail Mayo
479-2954

mayogail@gmail.com

Ester

Philip Martin
479-7384 (h)

martin@mosquitonet.com

Creamer's Refuge

Mark Ross
459-7301 (w)

markross@alaska.gov

Chena Ridge

Joyce Potter
479-3523 (h)

East Goldstream

Tom Green
452-6370 (h)
fftkg@uaf.edu

Farmer's Loop

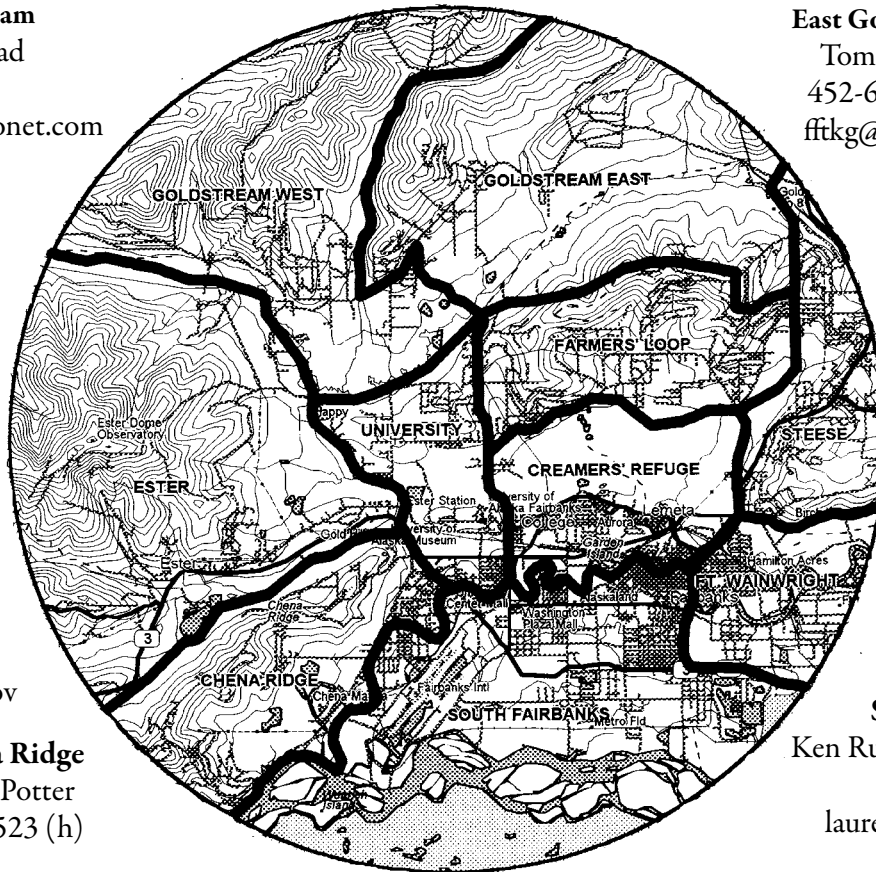
Jamie Marschner
458-0462 (h)
marschnr@polarnet.com

Steese/Wainwright

Pam Bruce
488-0283 (h)
pbruce@eagle.ptialaska.net

South Fairbanks

Ken Russell & Laurel Devaney
488-8170 (h)
laurel_devaney@fws.gov



Each Christmas Bird Count lasts 24 hours and covers a 177 square mile circle that is 15 miles in diameter. The Fairbanks count is centered on the intersection of Dalton Trail and Yankovich Road. The circle includes the top of Ester Dome, parts of the Chena and Tanana Rivers, the dump, and plenty of typical Interior habitat. The object of the count is to cover as much of the circle as possible while identifying and counting birds without duplication. Since our daylight hours are limited we need many observers willing to cover assigned areas.

- Feeder watchers are welcome to participate by counting the largest number of birds seen together for each species on that day.
- During "count week" (three days before and after count day) additional species seen or heard within the count circle can be added to the final list of species observed.
- Please use the data sheet on the reverse to record participants, numbers of birds and effort (time spent looking by various means). Be sure to contact your area coordinator at or before the potluck.

A \$5 fee is required from all field observers over 18 years old. Observers under 18, feeder watchers and owl listeners are not required to pay but will not receive the CBC issue of *American Birds* unless they choose to pay. Make sure we have your correct mailing address and let us know if you do not want to receive the CBC issue.

Plan to join us after dark for the compilation and potluck dinner (meat provided) at the Kunkel Community Center on Goldstream Road near Ivory Jack's. See directions at www.goldstreamvalley.net/kunkel/kunkelmap.html. Doors will open at 4:00 pm and dinner is at 5:00. Please bring a simple dish to share. BYOEU (bring your own eating utensils) if possible. We look forward to seeing you there!

The Christmas Bird Count is on line with data from 1900 to present at www.audubon.org.

If you can't attend the potluck be sure to contact your area coordinator before 5:00 pm. Data may be reported to 460-4659 after 4:00 pm. Jim DeWitt will be at the dinner to enter all results onto the data sheet. Results will be published in the February issue of *The Redpoll*.

2008 Christmas Bird Count Data Entry Sheet

			This Year				2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
Area: _____			Parties:				87	75	75	80	65	86	70	
Observer: _____			Car	Miles	Car			395	649	684	535	489	527	441
Observer: _____			Foot		Foot			145	69	70	76	67	66	78
Observer: _____			Ski/SnowShoe		Ski/SnowShoe			10	9	4	27	29	73	20
			Other		Other			16	4	23	33	25	10	21
					Total:		566	731	781	671	609	676	560	
Observer: _____			Hours				51	84	85	79	72	78	69	
Add'l Species Observed in Count Week			Car	Car			95	44	49	54	58	47	41	
			Foot	Foot			5	5	2	13	11	30	12	
			Ski/SnowShoe	Ski/SnowShoe			4	1	3	7	5	2	5	
			Other	Other			79	63	65	51	36	66	65	
			Feeder	Feeder			Total:		234	197	204	204	181	223
	Feeder Count	Field Count												
			Mallard				90	84	27	122	106	188	325	
			Northern Pintail											
			Common Goldeneye										9	
			Barrow's Goldeneye										1	
			Common Merganser				23	14	1	8	10	21	10	
			Duck sp.										1	
			Ruffed Grouse				5	14	14	9	22	18	12	
			Spruce Grouse					*	*	2	18	*	3	
			Willow Ptarmigan						3			3		
			Sharp-tailed Grouse				1			1				
			Ptarmigan sp.						2					
			Bald Eagle											
			Sharp-shinned Hawk									1		
			Northern Goshawk				3	2	2	1	3	2	1	
			Peregrine Falcon										1	
			Rock Pigeon				91	249	131	123	545	134	277	
			Great Horned Owl				2	2	*	2	6		2	
			Northern Hawk Owl				1			*	8		1	
			Great Grey Owl											
			Boreal Owl				1		*	3	3			
			Downy Woodpecker				14	26	13	21	23	22	22	
			Hairy Woodpecker				20	23	19	30	33	26	26	
			3-toed Woodpecker				2	5	1	5	3	4	2	
			Woodpecker sp.				3	3	5	3	7		1	
			Northern Shrike				2	1	*				1	
			Gray Jay				115	135	92	127	161	125	87	
			Black-billed Magpie				5	7	5	17	9	6	5	
			Common Raven				1,326	1,413	2,007	1,767	1,644	1,459	1,505	
			Black-cap'd Chickadee				937	615	644	851	1,177	1,012	1,011	
			Boreal Chickadee				269	168	107	239	217	298	249	
			Chickadee sp.				90	38	5	56	46	20	28	
			Red-breasted Nuthatch				4	4	5	4	4	5	6	
			Brown Creeper						1					
			American Robin				1	3	3	5			3	
			Townsend's Solitaire										2	
			Bohemian Waxwing				192	347	193	131	143	188	441	
			Fox Sparrow											
			White-crowned Sparrow				*							
			Dark-eyed Junco							1		4	3	
			Snow Bunting											
			Pine Grosbeak				214	104	101	84	35	197	103	
			White-winged Crossbill				21	420	4	311	4	4	4	
			Common Redpoll				1,584	1,448	290	4,001	798	3,064	399	
			Hoary Redpoll				39	76	69	64	5	25	29	
			Redpoll sp.				2,308	3,353	369	4,192	879	3,248	1,204	
			Pine Siskin											

Sponsors--Arctic Audubon Society and ABO

Bird Count Total: 7,363 8,554 4,113 12,180 5,909 10,075 5,773
Count Day Species: 25 22 22 25 23 22 29

Highlights for Mist Net 4

Adopted by Arctic Audubon Society

In 2008, The Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) completed their 17th year of banding songbirds at the Creamer's Field Migration Station, and Arctic Audubon Society once again participated by sponsoring Mist Net 4. ABO operated the station with the help of over 60 volunteers with 1,600 hours of service and banded approximately 3,700 birds of 41 species from April 21–September 30, 2008. More than 2,600 people visited the Station and attended banding demonstrations.

Mist Net 4	
Species	Total
Swainson's Thrush	7
Black-capped Chickadee	7
Dark-eyed Junco	7
American Robin	6
Yellow-rumped Warbler	4
Fox Sparrow	4
Hermit Thrush	3
Common Redpoll	3
Gray-cheeked Thrush	3
Northern Waterthrush	2
Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	1
White-crowned Sparrow	1
Yellow Warbler	1
Savannah Sparrow	1
Total	51

Birding Trail at Tanana Lakes Recreation Area

Reprinted with permission from *Interior Trails Quarterly*

A bird-viewing trail in the Tanana Lakes Recreation Area should be ready for spring migration. The trail has been brushed and four viewing platforms have been installed, according to Steve Taylor, project coordinator. A contract to build a 6-foot-wide gravel path has been issued with a deadline of May 30. The 1000-foot-trail, which already existed in primitive form, runs along the northeast shore of a lake that attracts many migrating birds. Work was funded by a state Recreational Trails Program grant.

The trail now exits directly onto South Cushman Street. The borough plans to build a small parking lot about 100 to 300 feet to the north of the existing trailhead with a short connector trail.

The borough has held clean-up days in the recreation area, but will not hold another one until access to the area can be restricted. The borough hopes to have some form of access control in place by next fall.



Photos by Rich Flanders



Report your sightings ...

Chickadee Beak Deformity Alert

by Caroline Van Hemert, USGS Alaska Science Center

For nearly a decade, Alaskans have observed large numbers of Black-capped Chickadees with grossly overgrown and crossed beaks. The USGS Alaska Science Center began research in 1999, and we have since identified more than 2,000 deformed Black-capped Chickadees in Alaska—the highest concentration of such abnormalities ever recorded in a wild bird population anywhere. More recently, rapidly increasing numbers of other species, including Downy Woodpeckers, Northwestern Crows, Steller's Jays, and Black-billed Magpies have also been reported with beak deformities. Reports of deformities from throughout the state, including around the Fairbanks area, have continued to increase in recent years.

Although we do not yet know the source of this widespread problem, we continue to investigate potential causes, including environmental contaminants, nutritional deficiencies, and disease. Nearly all of the species affected are year-round residents, and we suspect that factors responsible for this cluster of deformities may be unique to Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Reports from the public help us to determine where and how many birds are affected. If you see a bird with a deformed beak, please report it via our web site http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/landbirds/beak_deformity/ or email Caroline Van Hemert at: cvanhemert@usgs.gov.



Alaska Bird Observatory Raffle!

An original handcrafted table by John Wright and Nancy HausleJohnson

Tickets are \$5 each or 5 for \$20 and are available at ABO. Drawing is December 19th.

For information call (907) 451-7159



Arctic Audubon Society
PO Box 82098
Fairbanks, AK 99708

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 181
Fairbanks AK

Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

Bird ID Program: Birds of the Winter Boreal
Monday, December 15, 7 pm, Noel Wien Library
Get ready for Christmas Bird Count at this presentation by David Shaw, ABO Biologist

Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 27
Annual bird count and compilation potluck; see details on pages 3 & 4.

Changing Climate for Arctic Refuge Protection,
Monday, January 12, 7 pm, Noel Wien Library
Pam Miller will provide insights and updates on wilderness protection for the Arctic Refuge coastal plain.

Winter Solstice Walk, Saturday, December 20,
1–3:00 pm at Creamer’s Field.
Meet at the Farmhouse Visitor’s Center; sponsored by Friends of Creamer’s Field.

Arctic Audubon Board of Directors

email address: arcticaudubon@gmail.com

President: Gail Mayo (479-2954)

Vice President: Open

Secretary: Open

Treasurer: Janet Daley (457-1583)

Education: Open

Conservation: River Gates (455-0273)

Hospitality: Brook Gamble (456-3775)

Programs: Lauren Attanas (474-9736)

Newsletter: Mary Zalar (479-4547)

Membership: Mary Zalar (479-4547)

Field Trips: Frank Keim (451-9308)

Birdathon: Sherry Lewis (479-0848)

Web Site: Jim DeWitt

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.

National Audubon Society New Member Form

Introductory rate, \$20

Introductory Two Year Membership, \$30

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

I would like to receive email announcements from Arctic Audubon Society. My email address is:

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

Send to: Arctic Audubon Society **A52**
PO Box 82098 **79M7**
Fairbanks, AK 99708

Chapter Only Membership, \$10

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