

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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100,000 and Counting...

Exciting new and old things you didn't know about the UA Museum of the North mammal collection!

presentation by Link Olson, Mammals Curator

Monday, February 9, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

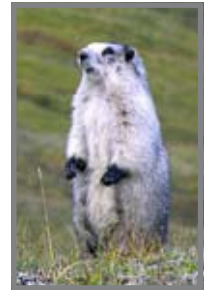


Photo by Jack Whitman

With over 100,000 specimens, the University of Alaska Museum of the North's mammal collection is among the ten largest in the United States. Mammals Curator Link Olson will review the history of the collection and its continued growth, recent expeditions, and the increasingly prominent role the collection plays in scientific research on a wide range of themes, including climate change and conservation.

Link Olson is an evolutionary biologist specializing in mammals. Prior to moving to Alaska in 2003, his research involved tropical mammals from Madagascar and southeast Asia. He has since developed an Alaska research program, largely through collaborative research with graduate students, postdoctoral advisees, and other colleagues.



Mammalogist Link Olson works with mammals large and small, from far and near. In the far left photo, Link sits in the rear of a boat in Madagascar during a trip last May. Photo at left is a shrew and above is a marmot. Photos provided by Link Olson.

Upcoming Events

Beak Deformities in Alaskan Birds: Unraveling the Mystery

on Wednesday February 11th, 7 pm. For nearly a decade, Alaskans have observed increasing numbers of Black-capped Chickadees with grossly overgrown and crossed beaks. More recently other resident species, including woodpeckers, nuthatches, crows, and magpies, have also been documented with similar beak deformities. Learn more about this widespread problem and what you can do to help at this presentation by Caroline Van Hemert on February 11th, 7:00 pm at the Alaska Bird Observatory, 418 Wedgewood Drive.



Nature Walk With Arctic Audubon on Saturday, February 21st, 1:00 pm. Join Arctic Audubon for a pleasant walk in the woods. We will meet at 1:00 pm at the Creamer's Refuge parking lot (by the barns) to carpool to our destination. Dress to be comfortable walking outdoors for one to two hours. This walk will be postponed to the following weekend if the temperature at Noon is below -10° F. If in doubt, check the time/temperature number (844) for the official temperature.

Arctic Audubon Offers Small Grants

Application deadline: March 16, 2009

Arctic Audubon Society's Small Grants Program funds conservation related projects that support our mission to protect Alaska's ecosystems by encouraging research, education, and management that will contribute to appreciation and good stewardship of our natural heritage. This year (2009) will be our sixth year of offering small grants.

In 2009 Arctic Audubon will consider applications for small grants of up to \$1,000. Partial funding may be offered to several applicants. Proposed 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 teachers are encouraged to apply. Successful applicants will be expected to submit a report of outcomes and may be asked to give a short public presentation. Applicants should submit:

1. A one page cover letter introducing themselves and including contact information;
2. A one page project description including a budget and timeline for completion.

Applications are due March 16, 2009. Please submit by email to arcticaudubon@gmail.com or by mail to Arctic Audubon, PO Box 82098, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708.

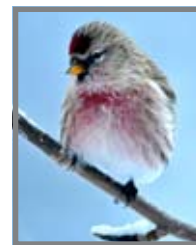
Arctic Audubon Society is a nonprofit conservation organization based in Fairbanks, Alaska. As a chapter of the National Audubon Society our region encompasses the area north of the Alaska Range, including the North Slope and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

For more information about Arctic Audubon visit our website at [www/arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org). Please direct questions to arcticaudubon@gmail.com.

Frosty Feathers: Avian Tales of Winter Survival

Tuesday, February 17, 7:00 pm

Join Dr. Susan Sharbaugh, senior scientist at the Alaska Bird Observatory, for a presentation on Tuesday February 17th, 7:00 pm at the Gold Room in the Westmark Hotel. Birds fly to Alaska from around the world to breed under the Midnight Sun. But when the days grow short and the temperature drops, only a handful remain to brave the winter in Interior Alaska. Chronic low temperatures and limited day length present a considerable challenge for these hardy residents. How do chickadees, ravens, and redpolls survive? What do they eat? Where do they sleep? What are the physiological adaptations and behavioral tricks that allow them to live through an Alaskan winter using only muscles, feathers, and fat? Come hear some amazing stories of avian winter survival!



Redpoll
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

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 Alaska eBird website, which includes great photos, interesting birding news and features, as well as observation records:

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

This lecture is part of the "Science for Alaska Lecture Series," sponsored by the University of Alaska and the Geophysical Institute.

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count Count for fun, count for the future

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org/gbbc. Participants can also explore what birds others are finding in their backyards—whether in their own neighborhood or thousands of miles away. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.

The data these “citizen scientists” collect helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation, and offers a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

Each year, participants also submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest. Many are featured in the online gallery and participants are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube.

How is the information from the GBBC used?

Bird populations are constantly changing. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to keep track of the complicated patterns of movement of so many species over an entire continent. The information from GBBC participants is even more valuable as scientists try to learn how birds are affected by environmental changes. The information you send in can provide the first sign that individual species may be increasing or declining from year to year. It shows how a species' range expands or shrinks over time. A big change, noted consistently over a period of years, is an indication that something is happening in the environment that is affecting the birds and that should be followed up on. GBBC information also allows us to look at what kinds of birds inhabit different areas, such as cities versus suburban.

All the information from the GBBC and other surveys goes into a massive bird database called the Avian Knowledge Network online at www.avianknowledge.net. AKN now holds 36 million records of bird observations which are used by scientists around the world.



A Downy Woodpecker was spotted in University West.

Photo by Ken Whitten

Christmas Bird Count A Usual Count ?

When the 48th Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count was complete on December 27, 2008 there was nothing unusual to report. The weather was not really cold—although the temperatures were headed down, it was tolerably pleasant compared to the following two weeks. There were no new or unusual species to confirm, but the Black-backed Woodpecker did add spice to the day. There were no high numbers to flag, yet the Ruffed Grouse and Hairy Woodpecker numbers matched the all time highs for those species.

Were there surprises? There were many White-winged Crossbills in the South Fairbanks and Creamer's Field areas and almost none elsewhere. Likewise, the Redpolls seemed to prefer certain areas (Chena Ridge, Creamer's Field, and South Fairbanks) where observers counted well over 1,000 Redpolls per area. In the remaining six areas, the highest count didn't reach 400. The lone American Robin sighted in a chokecherry tree near Sheep Creek Road was surprising. While we often see one or two wintering Robins, they are usually in closely settled older neighborhoods with numerous chokecherry trees. Finally, it was surprising that in almost 200 hours of looking no one saw a raptor.

It is always a pleasant surprise that so many of you (72 in all) go out in the cold and actually find birds. Many thanks to area co-ordinators: Pam Bruce, Laurel Devaney and Ken Russell, Joyce Potter, Philip Martin, Brian Lawhead, Tom Green, Jamie and Bud Marschner, and Mark Ross. And, welcome to several new participants. We hope to see you all again next year.

Final results will be posted on the CBC link at our website, www.arcticadubon.org.

Summer Institute to Study John James Audubon



Photo by Gail Mayo

Who is Showing Up at Your Feeder?

A red fox has enjoyed dining at one of Larry and Gail Mayo's birdfeeders this winter. Let us know of interesting critters visiting your feeder this year! Comments and photos can be submitted to the newsletter editor via email: zalar@alaska.net.

Alaska Audubon Creates Video on Teshekpuk Lake

You've read the news articles and action alerts. You've sent letters and emails to BLM and Congress. Now see this awesome, remote wetland for yourself via an online video about Teshekpuk Lake in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The video can be viewed at the Audubon Alaska website:

http://www.audubonalaska.org/IssuesAction_Teshekpukvideo.html

Full-time K-12 teachers, school librarians or administrators who want to find out more about John James Audubon are invited to apply to a Summer Institute at Indiana University Bloomington, *Picturing John James Audubon*, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Audubon was America's first painter of international stature. He was also one of America's first important nature writers and most accomplished travelers, crisscrossing the continent, from Labrador to New Orleans, from the Hudson to the Missouri River. No one had seen quite as much, and no one was equally talented as a writer and as a visual artist.

The Institute takes place from Monday, July 6 through Friday, July 31, 2009, on the beautiful campus of Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, close to some of the sites where Audubon began his lifelong journey to paint and describe American birds and animals. Assisted by internationally known experts, the director of the Institute, Christoph Irmischer (English, Indiana University), and core faculty members Alan Braddock (Art History, Temple University) and Joel Silver (The Lilly Library, Indiana University) seek to inspire teachers with a variety of backgrounds (English, History, Art, Biology) to incorporate American art into their curricula, to stimulate them to pursue research on their own, and to further their career goals. The program of the Institute also includes trips to the Audubon Museum in Henderson, Kentucky, and the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois.

Participants selected for the Institute are eligible for a stipend. For further information, check out the Institute's website www.iub.edu/~engweb/PicturingJohnJamesAudubon.html. You may also send an email to ahornick@indiana.edu or call 812-855-8226.

Olympic BirdFest 2009 April 3-5, 2009 Sequim, Washington

Grab your binoculars and join the Olympic BirdFest 2009 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, April 3-5, 2009. Come bird with us and experience with others the spectacular landscapes of the Olympic Peninsula. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours; and a traditional salmon bake at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center. You just might go home with a new bird for your life list!

Also this year, you can follow your BirdFest weekend with a three-day, two night birding cruise of the spectacular San Juan Islands on April 5-7, 2009. Visit San Juan and Sucia Islands, and more. Stay at the historic Roche Harbor Resort.

Get program information and registration forms online at www.olympicbirdfest.org or e-mail us at info@olympicbirdfest.org. Contact us by phone at 360-681-4076.



Wild Moments: Adventures with Animals of the North

Edited by Michael Engelhard with stories by Douglas Chadwick, Craig Childs, Richard Nelson, Nancy Lord, and others.

University of Alaska Press. February 2009
Paperback (252 pages). \$ 21.95.

Even in our technological age, run-ins with wildlife—whether in urban or wilderness settings—rupture daily routines. They delight or dismay but hardly ever leave us unmoved. Not unlike us and often within sight of our doorsteps or tents, wild animals court, mate, give birth, raise their young, fight, play, build, forage, and die. We cherish these chance meetings and continue to fashion them into stories that remind us of fundamentals: Our heritage. Our connections. Our responsibilities.

Wild Moments brings readers face to face with the North's incredible fauna, through accounts by the best of contemporary nature writers. Their stories transcend the mere hunting-and-fishing or natural history narrative. The book's 33 selections showcase different species and capture wild animals in their essence: the magic and unpredictability, the humor, the pathos, the offbeat, bone-and-gristle, the smell of blood and the softness of fur. Crows battle each other, and bears pilfer fruit; a trapped marten rubs shoulders with a drowning whale; dive-bombing goshawks mingle with feisty seals. In many of these stories the personal intersects the political, but the writers are stalking bigger game with their pens: a glimpse of nature, including our own, reflected in the lives of fellow beings. Smart, witty, wise, perplexed or enchanted but always engaged, their voices mix in a chorus as polyglot as the menagerie they describe.

While the book's essays are rooted in landscapes known intimately by only a few people, each touches upon universal themes—the desires and dilemmas, fears and choices that spring from our tangling with wildness. Above all, they show us what is at risk of being lost.

As indicators for a healthy planet, northern animals inhabit refuges of hope. Though the reader may never cross paths with a wolverine, startle a griz at some fishing hole, or stand transfixed as loons ululate their evensong, it is good to know they are out there, that the potential for authentic adventure, for surprise and freedom persists.

Michael Engelhard has authored and edited several books of nature writing, most recently, *Redrock Almanac*. Trained as a cultural anthropologist, he migrates between the Colorado Plateau and Alaska, where he works as a wilderness guide. His interests range from whales to voles but encompass the wild side of *Homo sapiens*. A bluff charge by a grizzly sow sparked the idea for this book, though the editor ultimately agrees with Paul Shepard: “Art can never replace, certainly not explain that adventure among the Others which remains central to our lives...” For more wild moments, visit www.michaelengelhard.com.



Photo by Mike Endres

Viewing Sandhill Cranes in Kearney, Nebraska

Arctic Audubon member Mike Endres sent photos and this comment in a recent email:

“I was lucky enough to get out to Kearney, Nebraska last spring and enjoy the cranes as they came through. It is very impressive! I would encourage anyone going to reserve a photo blind, even if they aren't going to photograph. The experience of being that close to so many cranes is truly unforgettable, as well as pretty darn noisy! Seriously though, it's pretty neat spending the night in the blind and being awakened by thousands of birds just a few meters away.”

Each March the Rivers and Wildlife Celebration is held in Kearney, Nebraska 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.



Arctic Audubon Society
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Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

100,000 & Counting: Museum Mammal Collection, Monday, February 9, 7 pm, Noel Wien Library

Presentation by Mammals Curator Link Olson

Beak Deformities in Alaskan Birds, Wednesday, February 11, 7 pm, Alaska Bird Observatory

Presentation by Caroline Van Hemert.

Frosty Feathers: Avian Tales of Winter Survival, Tuesday, February 17, 7 pm, Westmark Hotel Gold Room

Presentation by Dr. Susan Sharbaugh

Nature Walk with Arctic Audubon, Saturday,

Feb. 21, 1 pm; meet at Creamer's Field to carpool.

Join Arctic Audubon for a winter walk in the woods.

Arctic Audubon Small Grants Program

Proposals due by March 16; details on page two.

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.

**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.