

The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 31 Issue No. 5

www.arcticaudubon.org

March 2009



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...

Binocular tips	2
Calendar	4
Citizen Science Report	3
Creamer's Field Events	2
Small Grant Deadline	2
Volunteer Opportunities ..	2
Wood Bison Project	3

Smith's Longspur Ecology Studies in the Brooks Range, Alaska

presentation by Teri McMillan, UAF Graduate Student

Monday, March 9, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

Smith's Longspur is a species of conservation concern, yet few previous studies have been conducted on their breeding grounds in Alaska. To develop effective conservation measures, we need an understanding of population abundance and distribution. UAF Graduate Student Teri McMillan will present collaborative research to document the species' density, distribution, and habitat associations in the Brooks Range.



Male Smith's Longspur

Arctic Audubon Spring Field Trips

Join us for a delightful nature walk during one of the many field outings offered this spring by Arctic Audubon Society. Several of us enjoyed a sunny hike on the Waterford Trail on Saturday, February 21st. We shared the lovely woods with moose, Redpolls, and Chickadees. Couldn't have been better! Here's what we have scheduled on Saturdays during the next few months:

March 14th will be a field trip to a local natural area for an afternoon walk in the woods. Wear appropriate clothing to be active out of doors for 2-3 hours. Meet at 1:00 pm by the big barn at Creamer's Refuge for carpooling to the walk site. The walk will be postponed to the following Saturday if the temperature at noon is colder than -10 F (call 844 for official temperature).

April 18th will be an all day birding trip to Delta Junction to catch sight of early bird arrivals. We plan to leave at 9:00 am—meet by the big barns at Creamer's Refuge for carpooling. Be prepared for mud and wind and bring your binoculars and lunch. We can stop for dinner on the way home if the group wants to. You may call any board member if you have questions.

May 2nd is Spring Migration Celebration at Creamer's Field, Noon to 5 pm, and features bird watching and bird related activities for the whole family.

Local birding experts will lead a series of three birding field trips. All trips meet at 9:00 am at the Creamer's Field Farmhouse and usually last until Noon. Bring binoculars, a snack, and rubber boots if you have them.



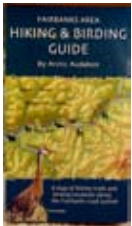
- May 9th** Waterfowl Identification
- May 16th** Shorebird Identification
- May 23rd** Birding by Ear and Songbird Identification

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 Bird Observatory Education Center, Beaver Sports, Friends of Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center, Geophysical Institute Map Office, and Gulliver's Books. Maps

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 photos, interesting birding news and features, as well as observation records:

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



This newsletter is printed on *Harbor 100* paper that uses 100% post-consumer recycled materials and is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. According to the Grays Harbor Paper website (www.ghplp.com/paper.html) no trees are cut down and no fossil fuels are burned in the production of *Harbor 100*.

Correction: The photo on page three of the February 2009 newsletter should have been identified as a Hairy Woodpecker.

Volunteer for Bird Conservation

There will be several opportunities this spring to volunteer for bird conservation. Please contact a board member or email us at arcticaudubon@gmail.com to volunteer.

- During the last week of April, the front fields at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge will be full of migratory waterfowl as well as some shorebirds, passerines, and even a few raptors. School children will be coming to the Refuge for a programmed visit. Anyone who enjoys kids and birds is welcome to help with the programs. Many volunteers are needed and training is available.
- Saturday, May 2nd is the date set for "Spring Migration Celebration" at Creamer's Field. This is a fun afternoon of bird watching and bird related activities for Fairbanksans eager to celebrate the arrival of spring. Volunteers are needed and will be most appreciated.
- During May, Arctic Audubon and Alaska Bird Observatory will be encouraging everyone who supports nature education and conservation to participate in the annual Farthest North Birdathon, a fun way to get out and see how many birds you can find in a 24 hour period while raising money for your favorite bird organizations.

Arctic Audubon's Small Grants

Proposals Due 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. Details are available at our website, www.arcticaudubon.org, in the February issue of our newsletter or by clicking on the "small grants" button. Direct questions and submit all materials to arcticaudubon@gmail.com.

Events at Creamer's Field

Spring Equinox Walk, Saturday, March 21st, 1–3:00 pm

Take an early spring walk on the Creamer's Field Refuge trails to celebrate the technical changing of the seasons. Look for signs of local animals that are just waking up or have been active during our cold weather. Learn about signs to look for in the coming weeks. The walk leaves the Farmhouse at 1:15 pm. This event is free, donations are graciously accepted.

Owl Program, Thursday, March 26th, 7–8:30 pm, Noel Wien Library

Enjoy a talk and slide show about the ecology of local owls, how to find them and identify their calls, and meet live owls! This is also the kick-off event for Friends of Creamer's Volunteer Training Program!

Binocular Tips

The Binocular Site is an independent online guide for all things related to the world of binoculars. The website provides a comprehensive overview of the world of binoculars, with pages covering everything from beginner binoculars to obscure models and uses. Check it out before you make your next binocular purchase: www.thebinocularsite.com

Citizen Science Shows Birds' Ranges Shift due to Global Warming

Reprinted from Audubon Alaska website, www.audubonalaska.org

As the climate warms, birds across North America are shifting their ranges northward. In Alaska, some northern and ice-loving birds are running out of places to go. A new study released in February by the National Audubon Society shows that over the last 40 years, a majority of the bird species that winter in North America have shifted their ranges north—in some cases by hundreds of miles. The full report may be viewed online at www.audubonalaska.org.

Within Alaska, 19 bird species are increasing significantly in population in the winter, indicating northward shifts in their ranges. Increasing species in Alaska include waterfowl, such as the Green-winged Teal and Northern Pintail, and many familiar songbirds, such as the American Robin and Bohemian Waxwing.

“Birds are indicators of environmental change, and they are now signaling the effects of a warming climate across the continent, including in Alaska,” said Matt Kirchhoff, Director of Bird Conservation at Audubon Alaska. “We often get calls at Audubon from people who are surprised to see American Robins during the winter in Alaska, and now we know this is part of a continent-wide trend.”

“Some species, like American Robins, are adaptable enough to adjust to a changing climate, but that won't be the case for many other Alaska species. Birds that nest on the North Slope, like Dunlins and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, have nowhere north to go,” said Kirchhoff. “If their nesting habitats change too much, these species will be in real trouble.”

Birds that depend on ice habitat, such as Ivory Gulls and Black Guillemots, are also losing habitat as the climate warms. Kittlitz's Murrelets, which are often associated with tidewater glaciers, are apparently declining in population in Alaska, and this species is a candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Audubon's study is based on four decades' worth of Christmas Bird Count data—tens of thousands of observations by volunteers since 1968. The 109-year-old Christmas Bird Count is the world's longest uninterrupted record of bird population trends. In Alaska about 900 citizens in 35 communities participate in the Christmas Bird Count, one of the highest rates of participation in the country.

“Citizen science is helping to document the impacts of global warming on birds,” said Stan Senner, Executive Director of Audubon Alaska, “and only citizen action can help reduce those impacts.”

Alaska Wood Bison Restoration Project

Many of our readers are familiar with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's project to return Wood Bison to Interior Alaska. This project has been in progress for the past 15 years, at least. Last summer a group of 53 Wood Bison entered Alaska and are at present in a two year quarantine holding facility in Portage, Alaska. Now the Alaska Wood Bison Restoration Project needs support.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) determined that Wood Bison in Alaska would be considered an endangered species. In January Doyon, Ltd. submitted a report to the Governor and members of the legislature which expressed serious concerns that, because of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), wood bison restoration would pose a threat to proposed oil and gas development projects on Minto Flats and Yukon Flats. In response to the Doyon report, on January 26, 2009 Senator Gene Therriault introduced Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 2 that “requests the Governor to direct the Department of Fish and Game to halt and reverse any effort to introduce Wood Bison into the Alaska wild.” If the Wood Bison project is not completely stopped, it is possible that the location and timing of the first release of Wood Bison to the wild will be changed.

A complete description of the project and how ADF&G is addressing concerns about Wood Bison and the ESA is available on the website:

<http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=game.restoration>.





Arctic Audubon Society
 PO Box 82098
 Fairbanks, AK 99708

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

Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

**Smith's Longspur Ecology Studies, Monday,
 March 9, 7:00 pm, Noel Wien Library**
 Public presentation by Teri McMillan, UAF

Small Grant Proposals Due by March 16

Saturday Field Trips: details on page one

- March 14 Local walk in the woods
- April 18 Birding trip to Delta Junction
- May 2 Spring Migration Celebration
- May 9 Waterfowl Identification
- May 16 Shorebird Identification
- May 23 Songbird Identification & Birding by Ear

Owl Program, March 26, 7–8:30 pm

Program on local owls at the Noel Wien Library;
 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 (456-1108)
- 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

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
 PO Box 82098 C9ZA520Z
 Fairbanks, AK 99708

Chapter Only Membership, \$10

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