

The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

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www.arcticaudubon.org

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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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Arctic Audubon presents...

Alaska's Charismatic Microfauna: Our Mostly Six-Legged Neighbors

presentation by Dr. Derek Sikes

Monday, February 8th, 7:00 pm
Noel Wien Library Auditorium

Most Alaskan animals have more than four legs and are smaller than a quarter, but this "smaller majority" is generally overlooked, underappreciated, and often disliked. Derek Sikes, professor of entomology and curator of insects at the University of Alaska Museum of the North will share highlights of his work with these fascinating Alaskan animals. Illustrated with his beautiful photographs, Dr. Sikes will explain the importance of insects, spiders and their kin, and the excitement of studying them in Alaska.

Derek Sikes was hired as the curator of insects at the University of Alaska Museum in July 2006. He is an advocate of the study and protection of arthropod, specifically beetle, biodiversity.



A wasp from the woodpile



Click beetle



A tenebrionid beetle that has been the subject of the physiology of insect overwintering team.

Photos by Derek Sikes

Upcoming Events

Northern Voices program features Frank Keim speaking about Yupik Eskimo villages Thursday, February 11, 7:00 pm, Noel Wien Library Auditorium



Hooper Bay women picking rye grass Photo by Frank Keim

Local writer, birder and activist Frank Keim and his wife Jennifer spent from 1978 to 2000 in the Lower Yukon School District teaching in four Yupik Eskimo villages. While there, Frank chronicled his experience with the local people and their fauna and flora with photos, stories and poetry. In this presentation Frank will show photos and read a few of the many poems he wrote while in the Lower Yukon Delta. Many of the poems feature the birds he loved to watch.

Arctic Audubon Field Trip to UA Museum of the North Bird Collection Saturday, February 13, 1:00 pm, UA Museum of the North

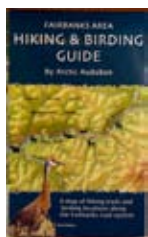
Join Arctic Audubon for a look at the UA Museum of the North bird collection. Jack Withrow, Curator of Ornithology, will be our guide. We will meet inside the museum at the main entrance.

Kanuti Whimbrels: Unlocking the mystery of their southward migration

Wednesday, February 17, 7 pm, Alaska Bird Observatory, 418 Wedgewood Drive

Biologist Chris Harwood will detail the southward migrations of Whimbrels breeding on Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge in north-central Alaska to their non-breeding grounds in Central and South America. For more information, call 451-7159.

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

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

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.



Mallard in winter on the Chena River.

Photo by Ken Whitten

Arctic Audubon Offers Small Grants Application deadline is March 15, 2010

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 will be our seventh year of offering small grants.

In 2010 Arctic Audubon will consider applications for small grants of up to \$1000. 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:

- A one page cover letter introducing themselves and including contact information
- A one page project description that includes a budget and timeline for completion.

Applications are due March 15, 2010. 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. Please direct questions to arcticaudubon@gmail.com.

Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15, 2010

Take part in the 13th annual Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from novice bird watchers to experts. Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

Each checklist submitted by these "citizen scientists" helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are doing—and how to protect them. Last year, participants turned in more than 93,600 checklists online, creating the continent's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded.

For more information about the GBBC, visit the website at www.birdcount.org. The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from Wild Birds Unlimited.

A Cold Day of Birding Christmas Bird Count 2009

We managed to pick a cold day for the 2009 Christmas Bird Count on December 19th. Creamer's Field reported a low of -38° F, and on some of the higher ridges there was a stiff breeze. Showing their true grit, 91 people participated in the count. Of these, 31 counted birds at their feeders for an average of two hours each. The gritty 69 folks who counted birds in 43 parties in the field averaged about three hours per party out in the cold. This included a chilly four hours on a snowmachine and a stint on the back of a dogsled. Note that some folks managed to count birds at their feeders as well as out in the field. This accounts for the discrepancy in numbers

Were there rewards for diligence on such a cold day? Just seeing a bird on such a day is a wonder and a confirmation that life can go forward in spite of the odds. A flock of Bohemian Waxwings 250 birds strong was spotted south of the Chena River and seen again as it moved west in the late morning. Another 250+ bird flock of Bohemian Waxwings in the Chena Pump Road area after Noon had to be the same flock. What a treat it was to see this large flock again just after Christmas near the Library. At Creamer's Field, a chickadee was seen going to roost in one of the Cliff Swallow mud nests that adorn the barn. In the University area, a team watched redpolls bury themselves in the snow on a roof of a house with a well stocked feeder. Additional small wonders included two lone Robins and busy festoons of redpolls enjoying the birch seeds that are so plentiful this winter.

A Christmas Bird Count relies on the participation of like-minded birders. Thank you to every one of you. Special thanks go to River Gates for stepping into the data entry spot for the count and to Jim DeWitt for maintaining the data file in excellent shape. The Area Coordinators who organize and record the efforts of all deserve extra thanks: Brian Lawhead, Philip Martin, Joyce Potter, Mark Ross, Jamie and Bud Marschner, Laurel Devaney and Ken Russell, Tom and Joe Green. Thank you for a job well done.

We hope all will enjoy spending some time looking at the data sheet on our website, www.arcticaudubon.org, from which you may make your own observations on the status of birds and bird watching in the Fairbanks area.

The 2009 Christmas Bird Count data is posted on the Arctic Audubon website, www.arcticaudubon.org. Click on the "Christmas Bird Count" button. Historical data from 1995 to the present is available there.



Rusty Blackbird nestlings.

Photo by Rachel Rabinovitz

Volunteer Opportunity

Ever wonder what it is like to be a field biologist? The Alaska Bird Observatory is offering the opportunity to spend two weeks with its Rusty Blackbird crew on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge this summer (mid-May until mid-July). We are looking for volunteers to assist the crew as they collect data on the breeding ecology of these boreal wetland birds. Camping gear, food, training, and the flight out (and back) to the study site are provided. You provide enthusiasm, curiosity, and a good sense of humor.

For further information contact April Harding Scurr (april1bird@gmail.com) or Susan Sharbaugh (451 -7159; ssharbaugh@alaskabird.org).

UA Museum of the North Annual Open House

Saturday, February 6, Noon to 4 pm

Explore the museum behind the scenes. Meet the curators and collection managers in their labs. Free admission.

Arctic Audubon Board News

- The Arctic Audubon Board of Directors invites you to attend the next Board meeting on Monday, February 1st, 6:30 pm. Contact Gail Mayo, 479-2954 for location. New board members are very welcome to join our fun and productive group.
- Audubon Board member David Shaw authored an article in the February 2010 issue of *Birder's World* titled "Birding Alaska's Arctic." Check it out!



Arctic Audubon Society
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 Fairbanks, AK 99708

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Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

Alaska's Charismatic Microfauna, Monday, February 8, 7 pm, Noel Wien Library
 Program on Alaska's insects by Dr. Derek Sikes.

Field Trip to UA Museum of the North Bird Collection, Saturday, February 13, 1 pm
 Curator Jack Winthrow will be our guide.

Kanuti Whimbrels: Unlocking the mystery of their southward migration Wednesday, February 17, 7 pm at Alaska Bird Observatory.
 Program by biologist Chris Harwood.

Arctic Audubon Board Meeting, Feb. 1, 6:30 pm
 Members are welcome to participate. Call 479-2954 for location.

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 (378-8775)
 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: Tom Green (452-6370)
 Alaska Audubon Board: Dave Shaw (590-7023)

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 **C0ZA520Z**
 Fairbanks, AK 99708

Chapter Only Membership, \$10

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