



# The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society

Fairbanks, Alaska

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[www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org)

December 2016

*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.*

## Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 31<sup>st</sup>

Celebrate New Year's Eve with a great day out counting birds by participating in the 56th Annual Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count. Following the count, congregate with other like minded folks to compile the results before moving on to whatever New Year celebration you have in mind. The compilation will take place at Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center starting at 3:30 pm. If our present spate of moderate weather continues it should be a fun count with possible surprises. Golden-crowned Kinglets have been heard recently and some hearty sparrows and thrushes seem to be hanging around.

Redpolls are on the rise but sparingly. A Hawk Owl was spotted on Thanksgiving Day. Who knows what will be seen near the river, or in the back fields. Please consider joining us as we comb the Fairbanks bird count circle for a sampling of this winter's birds. You will find all the information about the count inside this newsletter. Whether new to birding or an old hand, we can use your help. Call or email today.



*Pine Grosbeak on a Mountain Ash Tree.* photo by Ken Whitten

### Christmas Bird Counts in Arctic Audubon Society's Region

**Cantwell** – Sunday, December 18  
– coordinated by Jiill Boelsma,  
[alaskajill@gmail.com](mailto:alaskajill@gmail.com)

**Delta Junction** – December 17 –  
coordinated by Jeff Mason,  
[jdotmason@gmail.com](mailto:jdotmason@gmail.com)

**Denali** – December 17 –  
coordinated by Nan Eagleson,  
[surfbird@mtaonline.net](mailto:surfbird@mtaonline.net),  
907-683-2822 (home),  
907-750-3744 (cell)

**Nome** – December 17 (the count  
will be 18<sup>th</sup> if bad weather) –  
coordinated by Kate Persons,  
[katepersons@yahoo.com](mailto:katepersons@yahoo.com)

**Tok** - Tim Lorenzini, USFWS  
Tetlin NWR, 907-883-9419,  
[Timothy\\_lorenzini@fws.gov](mailto:Timothy_lorenzini@fws.gov)

## We are Prepared to Defend the Arctic Refuge

by Audubon Alaska staff Susan Culliney, Policy Associate, and Beth Peluso Grassi,  
Communications Manager

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a world-renowned icon of biological diversity, cultural significance, and wild untrammled landscape. The coastal plain of the Refuge is the biological heart, holistically holding together a spectacular Arctic ecosystem. In 2015, the Obama Administration made huge strides toward permanently protecting the Arctic Refuge coastal plain by formally recommending Wilderness designation. People from around the nation, including many Audubon supporters, lent their voices to this call for permanent protection. The groundswell of support resulted in unprecedented co-sponsorship of the Wilderness Bills pending in Congress. History seemed poised to grant permanent protections to the Arctic Refuge coastal plain, once and for all.

Then, just one day after the Presidential election, the Alaska Congressional delegation announced plans to open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling. The momentum we built for permanent protection has swung 180 degrees around to become plans for full-blown defense of the Arctic Refuge. The Refuge has faced threatening rhetoric and narrow escapes before. But the political landscape before us today is ominously similar to close calls of the past and must be met with strong opposition and hard work. At Audubon, a new campaign is already in the planning stages, a major part of which will be grassroots coordination. The same voices that spoke up so passionately for protection will now be asked to speak up in the Refuge's defense.

Birds don't recognize governmental or political boundaries. Arctic Audubon is the  
*continued on page two*

## Arctic Refuge

*continued from page one*

Audubon chapter closest in proximity to the Arctic Refuge, and therefore sees birds coming and going from the Refuge, making stops at your feeder or favorite birding hotspots. Other Audubon chapters and members across the Lower 48 may see these very same birds, or perhaps others originating from the Arctic Refuge. At Audubon, we are so fortunate to have this tangible and beautiful connection to each other, which manifests each spring and fall migration. Birds remind us that we are united, lest we forget in these contentious times.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a prime example of this migratory bird connection and of America's public lands. The Refuge belongs to all of us, and drilling should never occur there. Even within a conversation that contemplates some drilling activities on the North Slope, the line is drawn at the Arctic Refuge. The Refuge is the one piece of Arctic coastline which is set aside solely for birds, wildlife, and wilderness; it must stay that way.

Take a minute to write a letter to the editor of your local paper and explain how you feel about birds from the Arctic Refuge. Or, contact our Alaska Senators and tell them that not all Alaskans agree with their plans to open the Arctic refuge to oil drilling. Contact [sculliney@audubon.org](mailto:sculliney@audubon.org) for help on how to get started.

## President's Message

We are closing in on the end of 2016. We hope many of you will join us to celebrate the last day of the year by counting birds. Bird books and local lists help us find species in different areas around the world. However, common names and even scientific names keep changing. DNA studies have resulted in lumping or splitting. For instance Yellow-rumped Warblers used to be split into Audubon's and Myrtle Warblers. Not only that, they used to be in the genus *Dendroica* but are now *Setophaga*. So these days bird books and lists are becoming obsolete almost as fast as cell phones. Luckily the birds don't pay any attention to all of this and visually stay the same.

Our low sunlight on the snow is beautiful. Enjoy the winter season and the local birds that provide us a connection to nature.

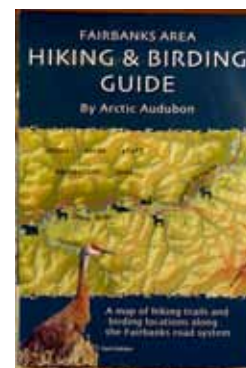
## Chapter News

Arctic Audubon Society sponsors monthly programs at the Noel Wien Library, September through May. There will be no program in January 2017 as the auditorium is unavailable. Our fall programs were related to climate change, with topics ranging from wolverines to the boreal forest. Our library display in October carried on this theme. Arctic Audubon's Board of Directors meets monthly, September to May.

We have three field trips in May after the migratory birds return, and some years we organize a trip to Delta Junction to greet arriving waterfowl and cranes. We participate in Fifth Grade Bird Walks at Creamer's Field, International Migratory Bird Day, and Earth Day.

This year, Arctic Audubon awarded a Small Grant to Sarah Degennaro for her "Chasing Cranes" project. You can follow Sarah's travels at [www.sarahdegennaro.com](http://www.sarahdegennaro.com).

Produced by Arctic Audubon, the *Fairbanks Area Hiking & Birding Guide*, \$12, can be ordered via email at [arcticaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:arcticaudubon@gmail.com) and is sold in Fairbanks at Beaver Sports, Friends of Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center, and Gulliver's Books.



## Audubon Membership Information

National Audubon Society Membership includes automatic membership in your local chapter, which is Arctic Audubon Society in Interior and northern Alaska. Memberships begin at \$20/year. Chapter only membership is \$10/year. All memberships include Chapter postcard or newsletter mailings. Give a gift membership or become a member in one of the following ways:

- Use the form on the back page of this newsletter or download a form from our website, [www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org), and mail to Arctic Audubon Society, PO Box 82098, Fairbanks AK 99708.
- Use the online form to join National Audubon Society or renew a membership at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).
- Call National Audubon to renew by phone at 1-844-428-3826
- Receive too much mail from the National Audubon Society? Ask to be taken off the mass mailing list by emailing Customer Service: [audubon@emailcustomerservice.com](mailto:audubon@emailcustomerservice.com).
- Local or national membership does not include support for Audubon Alaska state group, <http://ak.audubon.org>. We encourage members to support that group as well.

# 56<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FAIRBANKS 2016 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016

Compilation after sunset at the Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center, 3:30 pm on

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](mailto:mayogail@gmail.com)

West Goldstream

Brian Lawhead

[lawhead@mosquitonet.com](mailto:lawhead@mosquitonet.com)

University

John Wright

479-0194

Ester

Philip Martin

479-7384

[pdmartin1004@gmail.com](mailto:pdmartin1004@gmail.com)

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Chena Ridge

Joyce Potter

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[jpotter@alaska.net](mailto:jpotter@alaska.net)

East Goldstream

Gail Mayo

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[mayogail@gmail.com](mailto:mayogail@gmail.com)

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Jamie Marschner

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[jjmarschner@alaska.edu](mailto:jjmarschner@alaska.edu)

Steese/Wainwright

Melissa Sikes

374-2826

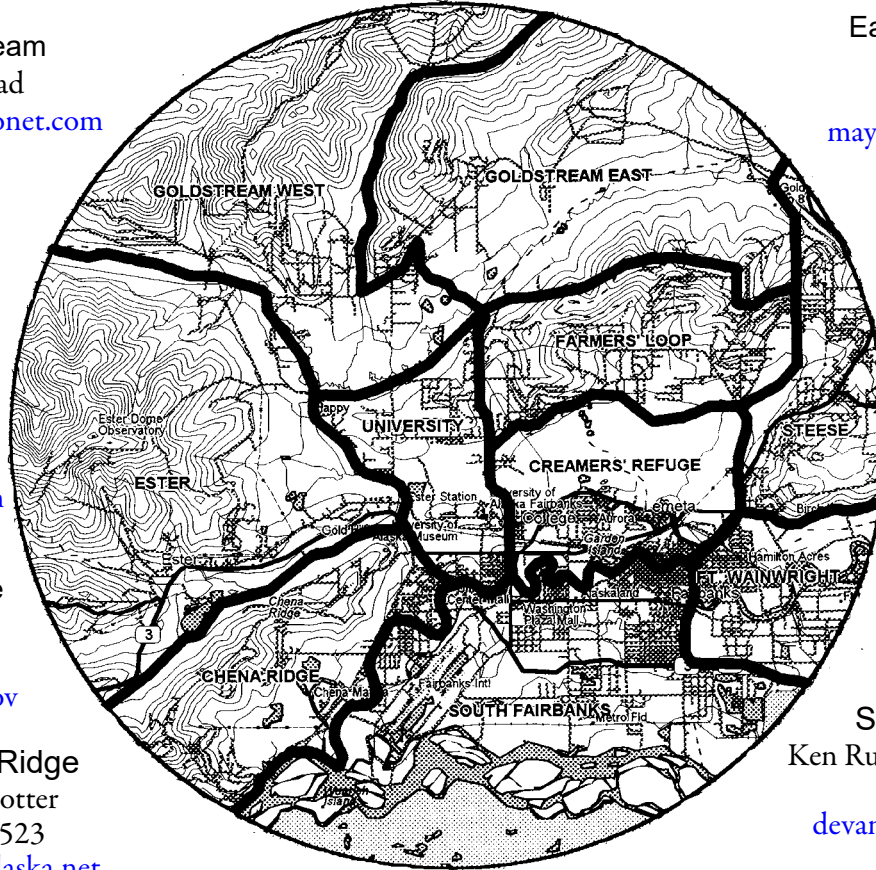
[melsikes5@gmail.com](mailto:melsikes5@gmail.com)

South Fairbanks

Ken Russell & Laurel Devaney

488-8170 (h)

[devaneylaurel@gmail.com](mailto:devaneylaurel@gmail.com)



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 volunteers willing to cover assigned areas.

- **Field observers** cover an assigned area and record species, numbers, and effort. Please use the data sheet on the next page.
- **Feeder watchers** participate by counting the largest number of birds of each species seen together on that day. Please use the data sheet on the next page.
- 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.
- **How to count Ravens:** Ravens should be counted only if they are using the habitat, ie they are flying low (at or below the tree tops), feeding, or hanging around. This will help eliminate duplicate counts of commuting Ravens.
- **Large flocks** should be counted as closely as possible. Please note the time and place large flocks are sighted so we can eliminate duplication.

Plan to join us for the compilation at the Creamer's Field Farmhouse Visitor Center after sunset. Doors will be open starting at 3:30 pm. Arctic Audubon will provide drinks and snacks. We look forward to seeing you there with your data. Our goal is to complete the compilation that day. If you cannot attend, be sure to contact your area coordinator on count day. Final results will be available on our website, [www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org), and published in a future newsletter. Christmas Bird Count data is online from 1900 to present at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

# 2016 Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count Data Entry Sheet (December 31, 2016)

<b>2016 DATA ENTRY SHEET</b>		2012	2013	2014	2015
Area:		71	71	74	86
	Parties				
	Car	552	513	515	469
	Foot	54	66	74	99
Observer:	Ski/SShoe	60	32	39	22
	Other	37	27	17	40
Observer:					
Observer:	Car	69	77	78	68
	Foot	37	47	56	76
Observer:	Ski/SShoe	23	12	16	10
	Other	10	8	6	15
Observer:	Feeder	50	48	84	75
Additional Species Observed During Count Week	Field Count				
		354	465	473	617
	Mallard				
	Northern Pintail				
	Common Goldeneye	22	24	8	13
	Barrow's Goldeneye	18	6		
	Common Merganser	9		9	5
	Harlequin Duck				1
	<b>Goldeneye sp.</b>		3	2	
	Ruffed Grouse	11	6	20	21
	Spruce Grouse	5		1	8
	Willow Ptarmigan	*			
	Sharp-tailed Grouse	1	1	13	11
	<b>Grouse sp.</b>				
	<b>Ptarmigan sp.</b>				
	Bald Eagle				
	Sharp-shinned Hawk				
	Northern Goshawk	1	*	1	7
	Peregrine Falcon				
	Rock Pigeon	321	452	531	927
	Great Horned Owl	*	*	1	3
	Northern Hawk Owl				2
	Great Grey Owl	1			
	Boreal Owl	*	*	1	*

Add'l Species	Feeder Count	Field Count	2012	2013	2014	2015
		Downy Woodpecker	18	13	18	20
		Hairy Woodpecker	26	25	23	15
		3-toed Woodpecker	1	1	1	3
		Black-backed Woodpecker				
		<b>Woodpecker sp.</b>	3		1	2
		Northern Shrike				3
		Gray Jay	125	65	98	136
		Black-billed Magpie	12	3	5	13
		Common Raven	807	1134	821	640
		Black-capped Chickadee	584	540	537	826
		Boreal Chickadee	194	79	85	222
		<b>Chickadee sp.</b>	62	46	25	45
		Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	9	8	11
		Brown Creeper				*
		American Robin		2	2	3
		Varied Thrush			1	
		Bohemian Waxwing	262	513	502	95
		Song Sparrow	1			
		White-crowned Sparrow				1
		Dark-eyed Junco	1	*	1	*
		Lincoln's Sparrow				1
		Pine Grosbeak	55	147	227	224
		White-winged Crossbill		3	110	1
		Common Redpoll	2820	552	1662	84
		Hoary Redpoll	47	2	3	1
		<b>Redpoll sp.</b>	2780	555	2109	176
		Pine Siskin				
		Golden-crowned Kinglet				3

Bird Count Total	8544	4646	7299	4140
CBC Day Species	24	21	27	30
Week Species	28	25	27	34

\* Additional Species during count week  
Sponsored by Arctic Audubon Society

## Consequences of Feeding Local Waterfowl

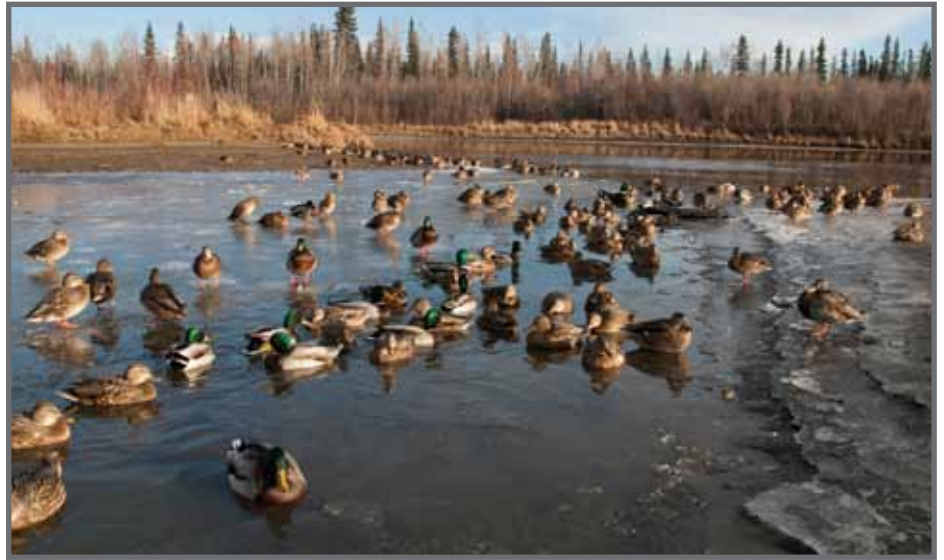
by Joyce Potter, Education Chair, Arctic Audubon Society Board of Directors

I recently received a letter from a local group called “Feed and Save the Ducks,” asking for monetary support. As the Education Board Member of Arctic Audubon Society, I have been asked by the Board to alert the Fairbanks community regarding feeding migratory ducks year round. As fun and caring as it might seem to feed the ducks, it has several negative consequences which impact not only the ducks, but the local environment and public health.

To begin with, feeding the ducks bread and corn is like feeding them junk food. It can not only cause health problems, but lure them away from healthy natural foods. By making ducks dependent on artificial feeding, they can lose their instinct for spreading out and searching for their natural foods. Access to easy food sources attracts more and more birds to a small area, subjecting them to increased competition for food. Weaker birds sustain injuries from more dominant and healthy birds, resulting in injury, infections and added stress. During spring breeding season, this can actually result in gangs of male ducks attacking each other and females to get access to the females, resulting in serious injuries and even drowning. And the females, to be safe and recover from injuries, move away from the safety and natural food resources found near water. This can further put them and their offspring in danger of starvation as well as risk of predation not associated with their natural nesting areas.

A large number of ducks in small areas, such as along the Chena River behind Pioneer Park, can have a serious impact on the surrounding area as well. The feces generated by a concentration of ducks and other waterfowl can promote diseases in ducks and produce toxins associated with illness in other wildlife and humans and pets. In warm conditions, such as our summers, there is also the hazard connected with feed sitting on the ground or in shallow water causing illness associated with mold and fungus from rotting or stagnant unnatural feeding, especially bread or corn. The growing number of ducks in a small area can cause diseases such as avian cholera, duck plague (duck virus enteritis), aspergillosis ( a fungal infection), Avian Botulism and even swimmers itch in humans caused by a parasite emitted from the excrement of ducks.

When people feed migratory ducks with unnatural foods



*Waterfowl congregate in open areas of the Chena River.*

Photo by Ken Whitten

such as bread and corn, they are not only introducing them to the human equivalent of junk food, but to nutritional deficiencies that can cause bones to grow soft as well as a condition known as “angel wing.” Both of these conditions can result in waterfowl being unable to fly, let alone migrate. During a severe cold snap such as we can have here in Fairbanks, the result can lead to death from cold or starvation. Starvation can result from the fact that unnatural foods such as bread or corn can fool the ducks into feeling full as the bread swells, even though the birds are essentially starving.

Normally, hungry waterfowl will migrate or at least travel to areas that have an abundant supply of natural, nutritious foods that are found in fields and ponds which contain natural foods such as wild grains and grasses, aquatic plants and bugs and invertebrates which are high in proteins, essential nutrients and minerals needed to stay healthy. In the Interior, there is a long history of a small number of ducks staying nearby during the winter. They have traditionally survived by traveling to open waters such as found on the Delta Clearwater or even Toklat Springs. The number of ducks no longer migrating or at least dispersing to safer areas, has multiplied beyond what the habitat can support. Continuing to feed them only increases the problem. One good cold snap can devastate unwary ducks who are starving on junk food or too damaged to migrate or even fly to safe areas of open water and nutritious natural foods.

The bottom line is, enjoy watching ducks in their natural habitat and eating natural foods, but do not feed them.

## National Audubon Society Membership, \$20

Membership includes both National Audubon Society and the local chapter, Arctic Audubon Society. You will receive National Audubon's magazine, *Audubon*, and postcard notices or newsletters from Arctic Audubon Society.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ A52

\_\_\_\_\_

*City*

\_\_\_\_\_

*State*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Zip*

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

Send to: Arctic Audubon Society, PO Box 82098, Fairbanks, AK 99708

## Chapter Only Membership, \$10

For membership in Arctic Audubon only, make check payable to Arctic Audubon Society. You will receive postcard notices or newsletters from the Chapter.

*Arctic Audubon Society publishes postcard notices or newsletters for its members monthly fall through spring. National Audubon Society (NAS) dues are \$20 and includes local chapter membership. Chapter only membership is \$10 and includes the newsletter.*

## Local Bird Sightings Reported on

### ***Boreal Birder***

[http://groups.yahoo.com/  
group/BorealBirder/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BorealBirder/)

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Fairbanks, AK 99708



### Citizen Science—Join These Local Bird Counts

**Christmas Bird Counts:** Dates on page one; Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count details on pages 3–4.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Great Backyard Bird Count, February 17–20, 2017:

Sponsored by the Great Backyard Bird Count team at Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Bird Studies Canada!

### Fairbanks Feeder Count: final count March 4, 2017

<http://aksongbird.org/education/fairbanks-feedercount>

Sponsored by Alaska Songbird Institute and Arctic Audubon Society.

*Stay connected with Arctic Audubon:*

website: [www.arcticaudubon.org](http://www.arcticaudubon.org)

facebook: [www.facebook.com/arcticaudubon](http://www.facebook.com/arcticaudubon)

email address: [arcticaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:arcticaudubon@gmail.com)

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