



The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society

Fairbanks, Alaska

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March 2018

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.

Arctic Audubon Society presents...

Dance on Top of the World

presentation by

Dr. Knut Kielland, UAF Professor of Ecology

Monday, April 2, 7:00 pm

Noel Wien Library Auditorium



Knut and Gray Jay photos courtesy of Knut Kielland



Rosie the Lynx

The Brooks Range represents pretty much the northern distribution limit of many boreal forest species such as snowshoe hares and their main predators—the Canada lynx and the great horned owl. I will present recent efforts by my students and collaborators to understand the ecology of these species, and highlight some aspects of their unique natural history in this part of Alaska.

Knut first came to Alaska as a teenager in 1977 to work on the Muskox Farm in Unalakleet. After getting degrees in anthropology and biology at UAF he is now a professor of ecology at the Department of Biology and Wildlife/Institute of Arctic Biology. His idiosyncrasies include a fondness for cooking *and* cleaning.

Bi-National Arctic Campaign Begins

by Subhankar Banerjee

We are building an expansive bi-national Arctic campaign – US and Canada – to defend Arctic Alaska. The week after “The Last Oil” symposium, there was a two-day Arctic strategy meeting in Washington, DC, and several participants of the symposium attended the strategy gathering. Another Arctic strategy meeting was held in Anchorage March 27–29. Realizing that the Arctic resistance campaign has picked up major momentum, the Department of Interior is fast-tracking the leasing process in the Arctic Refuge. They are moving truly at a breakneck speed, undermining the normal process and tribal consultations, and possibly even violating environmental laws.

Defending the Sacred Space of Democracy: Arctic Refuge Campaign Gathers Steam

By Pam Miller

In February, a number of Arctic Audubon members, Gwich’in and Inupiat leaders, scientists, artists and other Alaskans convened at the University of New Mexico for a symposium “The Last Oil” organized by Subhankar Banerjee and others. The participants adopted a proclamation, “The Fight for Alaska’s Arctic Has Just Begun.” The proclamation can be read in full at <https://thelastoil.unm.edu/proclamation/>. The symposium was live-streamed and can be viewed at <https://thelastoil.unm.edu/>. The symposium website is an educational resource for the campaign to defend biological nurseries and indigenous human rights. Banerjee urges us to, “introduce at least five young people to the symposium website” and ask them to watch a session and explore the Resources pages.

In March, Interior Department (DOI) top officials surprised us with a quick sweep through Alaska to announce a fast-tracked process for oil and gas leasing of the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain in a one-year Environmental Impact Statement process. This contradicts Senator Murkowski’s promises during the Congressional debate on the Tax bill to have an “environmentally robust” timeline. Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt went

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Porcupine Herd caribou on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

photo by Ken Whitten

Arctic Refuge Drilling is Huge Gamble for the Porcupine Caribou Herd

by Ken Whitten

Recent claims that historic high numbers of the Porcupine Caribou Herd prove that development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge can therefore proceed safely misses the point and comes to an unwarranted conclusion. The Porcupine Herd has indeed grown to historically high numbers, but there has never been any significant petroleum or other development on its range. The major developments on the North Slope lie well to the west of the Porcupine Herd in the range of the Central Arctic Herd.

As a biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, I was involved in numerous studies documenting that Central Arctic Caribou began changing movement patterns and avoiding previously preferred habitats almost as soon as development started on the North Slope. Female caribou, especially those with young calves, avoided structures and human activity. Calving quickly ceased in the Prudhoe Bay oilfield but persisted in the nearby Kuparuk and Milne Point oilfields, which incorporated more advanced drilling technology and various measures to facilitate free passage of caribou. Over time, however, even those fields morphed into a complex maze of roads, pipes, airports, processing facilities, and worker housing. Most caribou have quit calving there, too, although occasionally large numbers of caribou still enter the oilfields once their calves are older.

Fortunately for Central Arctic Caribou, the coastal plain near Prudhoe is up to 100 miles wide. Caribou displaced from their traditional calving grounds were able to find similar habitats nearby. The new habitats may not be ideal but are still adequate to support the herd and even allow for population growth during favorable environmental conditions. In occasional years of adverse weather, however, caribou have fared poorly, especially those that spend more time in or near the oilfields. From the 1970s through the 2010s the Central Arctic herd grew from about 5000 to over 50,000. Proponents of development cite this as evidence that oil production has had no effect on caribou. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is quoted as saying that "...caribou have not been adversely affected by human activities in Alaska. Pipelines and most other developments are built to allow for caribou

movements, and caribou have shown us that they can adapt to the presence of people and machines." But as outlined above, the truth is more complex. Caribou have been disturbed and displaced and they don't move freely through the oilfields. Rather, they have persisted by going elsewhere. Recently the Central Arctic herd has declined precipitously to about 20,000. The herd is hardly flourishing, and hunting seasons and bag limits are now dramatically reduced.

The coastal plain in the Arctic Refuge is much narrower than at Prudhoe Bay—only 10-40 miles wide—and is fully utilized by the much larger Porcupine Caribou Herd (now numbering over 200,000). The primary concern about the future of the Porcupine Herd is that they would adapt exactly as the Central Arctic Caribou did at Prudhoe Bay—by moving away from their traditional and vitally important calving grounds. Displacement similar to what occurred around Prudhoe and Kuparuk would force Porcupine caribou into areas with markedly poorer forage and higher predation. Caribou might still do alright under favorable environmental conditions, but it would be a huge gamble to assume they would thrive under the periodic adverse conditions that are a fact of life in the arctic. As caribou populations decline in size, their overall range tends to contract accordingly. The Gwich'in people who depend so heavily on Porcupine caribou live on the herd's winter range. If caribou cease to range as far in winter, the Gwich'in will surely suffer.

The Porcupine Caribou Herd has immense symbolic, cultural, and personal value for many people. The Arctic Refuge is a national treasure, and potential economic gains from petroleum development would be short lived and trivial to our nation's overall economy. Other oil prospects in less sensitive areas of Alaska can keep oil flowing through our pipeline for many years to come. Development in the Arctic Refuge cannot proceed without environmental harm to caribou and many other species. Policy makers owe this issue the courtesy of a complete and honest understanding of the science.

Ken Whitten retired after 24 years with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. He began monitoring caribou along the pipeline and at Prudhoe Bay in 1975 and for many years was the lead State biologist on studies of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

Arctic Refuge Campaign

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to Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow) and briefly met in Kaktovik, but did not go Arctic Village or other Gwich'in communities. Although he met with DOI employees in Fairbanks and Anchorage, media was only allowed into the Alaska Oil and Gas Association's event.

About 50 Fairbanksans gathered outside the Noel Wien Library, site of the DOI employee meeting on March 7th, in a rally organized in less than 24 hours by Defend the Sacred Coalition. Bernadette Demientieff, executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee said, "The Gwich'in people are opposed to all oil and gas activities in the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge and our position is not negotiable. For the Gwich'in, protecting the coastal plain is protecting our identity, our human rights, and our culture. The announcement that the Trump administration is moving forward to allow oil and gas on the coastal plain ignores the Gwich'in human rights in favor of the oil and gas industry. They plan to rush headlong into drilling in the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge, the sacred lands that support the Porcupine Caribou Herd and my people. This betrayal of our human rights only strengthens our resolve. We will fight to protect the coastal plain and all that it has provided us for centuries."

Terry Tempest Williams' book *The Open Space of Democracy* was inspired by educator Robert Dewey who said, "Democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself." Let us each find our vibrant niche nurturing defense of the Refuge whether as scientist, naturalist, teacher, artist, writer, birdwatcher, gardener or singer to share our knowledge and wonder about the incredible Arctic Refuge lands, peoples, and interconnections in our community of life.

We will have ample opportunities to take up the pen or microphone in the coming months in the campaign to defend the Arctic Refuge as the Department of the Interior aggressively moves for the oil and gas leasing program with seismic exploration and development that would desecrate the integrity of this vibrant migratory nursery grounds and sacred place where life begins.

Spring Birding Field Trips with Arctic Audubon Society

Saturday, April 21, Delta Junction Field Trip

Join Arctic Audubon on Saturday, April 21st for an all-day outing in the Delta Junction area where we will be searching for migrating cranes, waterfowl, hawks, and anything else that might be coming through. Meet on April 21st at 8:30 am at Creamer's Field Barn parking lot to car pool. Wear warm boots, clothing and hat, and bring lunch & snacks, binoculars, bird book or app, etc. If you have any questions, please contact Frank Keim, frankkeim@gmail.com or 775-762-3510.

Birding on Saturday Mornings

Local birding experts will lead a series of three Saturday morning birding field trips. All trips meet at 8:00 am at the Creamer's Field Farmhouse parking lot. Bring binoculars, a snack, and rubber boots if you have them. For more information, please contact Frank Keim, frankkeim@gmail.com or 775-762-3510.

- Saturday, April 28 Waterfowl Identification
- Saturday, May 12 Shorebird Identification
- Saturday, May 19 Birding by Ear and Song-bird Identification



Fairbanksans rally outside the Noel Wien Library on March 7th to advocate for the Arctic Refuge and rights of indigenous people. Photo by Pam Miller

President's Message

by Sherry Lewis

While in Nebraska recently, I watched around 330,000 cranes take off at sunrise from the Platte River near Kearney, NE. There were around that many snow geese, too. What an amazing, raucous phenomenon. The cranes are headed north, some to Fairbanks.

I hope you take time to get out to observe nature this spring, the snow will melt at some point. There are events, field trips, and bird festivals listed in this newsletter. Go for a walk in your neighborhood with your binoculars. Look and listen for new birds species arriving daily. Check out the fields at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. I wonder how many swans will stop by this year? Enjoy our wonderful state.

Website & Membership Update

Work continues on Arctic Audubon's website, and it may be active by the time you read this. We apologize for the delay. We have noticed continuing issues with National Audubon memberships—renewal dates may not update properly or duplicate mailings may be sent. Please report problems to Membership Chair Mary Zalar, 479-4547, or contact National Audubon at 844-428-3826 to check membership status or to change mailing preferences.

Festivals Celebrate Return of Migrating Birds to Alaska

Spring Migration Celebration, Saturday, April 28, Noon–4 pm

Celebrate the return of migratory birds to Interior Alaska at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge on Saturday, April 28th. Activities for all ages are offered and volunteers will be at the viewing platforms to help identify birds and have binoculars and spotting scopes available. This is Fairbanks' celebration of International Migratory Bird Day which merged this year with World Bird Day—and also celebrates Year of the Bird! Visit www.migratorybirdday.org.

Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival, May 3–6

Cordova invites you to join the mass migration of Pacific shorebirds, raptors, waterfowl and songbirds. Their shoreside respite is framed against the pristine backdrop of coastal glaciers and mountains, the breathtaking vista that we call home. Come outfitted with your binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras, sketch pads and pencils and leave with a heart full of memories. Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival, Alaska's original bird festival. The Keynote Speaker is Dr. Stephen Kress and featured speakers include Yenifer Diaz, Dianna Eusse-Gonzalez, Kristine Sowl, Kate McLaughlin, Debbie Miller, and Hugh Rose. Information at <http://www.copperriverdeltashorebirdfestival.com/>

Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival, May 10–13

Homer's seaside setting is perfect for spotting over 130 migratory bird species, as well as numerous other resident species. The 2018 Festival will host Keynote Speakers Noah Strycker, as well as Featured Presenters Raymond VanBuskirk and Iain Campbell. Distinguished guests will present a variety of workshops and lectures, including presentations on Strycker's new books, *Birding Without Borders*. Campbell will offer daily photography workshops as well. This year's featured artist is Homer's own Erin Rae D'Eimon.

As always, this year will feature over 100 activities to choose from, including the return of the Shorebird Arts & Education Fair! Registration and a full listing of events will be available later in March. Information available at <http://kachemakshorebird.org/>

Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival, August 24–26

When our birds head south again, Fairbanks watches them gather at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge and celebrates them at the Sandhill Crane Festival. Watch for more information at www.friendsofcreamersfield.org/crane_festival2018.shtml

ALASKA SONGBIRD INSTITUTE

SONGBIRD SOIRÉE

Featuring artist Jennifer Moss' painting, 'Harmony', &
 Outcry auction for outdoor enthusiasts
 Silent auction for bird lovers
 Live music by Alan Bent and Friends
 Open bar with beer by Hoodoo
 Appetizers



April 7, 2018 5:00-8:00
 Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fairbanks
 tickets @ aksongbird.org/annual-fundraiser/

Alaska Climate Change Strategy Planning

On October 31, 2017, Governor Bill Walker signed Administrative Order 289 establishing the Alaska Climate Change Strategy and Climate Action for Alaska Leadership Team (CLAT) with information available on the website <http://climatechange.gov.alaska.gov/>.

The Climate Action for Leadership Team held its inaugural meeting on December 18, 2017 in Anchorage. Team members identified near-term and long-term (2030 and 2050) goals and visions for Alaska's climate policy and developed an initial work plan for 2018. The leadership team has a September 2018 deadline to present its recommended climate action plan to the Governor.

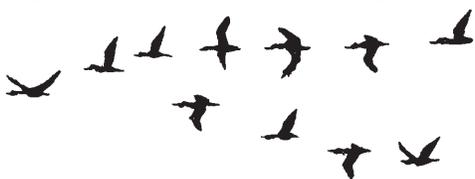
CALT members participate in one or both working groups on mitigation and adaptation. The Mitigation Working Group focuses on growing renewable energy, energy efficiency, and community and commercial emissions reductions. The Adaptation Working Group focuses on strengthening social, environmental, and economic resilience in the context of climate change.

Past and future meetings are open to the public as observers, and details of upcoming meetings will be posted via the public notice system.

Alaska Bird Conference coming to Fairbanks in 2019!

Save the date for the 18th Alaska Bird Conference to be held in Fairbanks, March 4–7, 2019 at the Westmark Hotel. Every two years, Alaska bird researchers, educators, and managers convene to report on all aspects of bird biology, management, and conservation in Alaska. The conference moves around the state, and for the first time in over 10 years, it is returning to Fairbanks!

The Alaska Songbird Institute, in partnership with many others, is pleased to host the conference. Stay tuned to the conference website www.alaskabirdconference.org and Facebook for all the important details including keynote speaker, community events, abstract submission, travel awards, registration, concurrent meetings, and more.



An Afternoon With Owls

Saturday, March 31, Noon–4 pm, Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center

- 1–4 pm Owl Crafts, Owl Pellets, Owl Bones
- 1–2:15 pm Meet & Greet with Ghost and Dave
- 2:30–3:45 pm Owl Talk in the Auditorium with David Dorsey of Bird TLC and Ghost

Sponsored by Friends of Creamer's Field, AK Department of Fish & Game, Bird TL, and APLIC.

Camp Habitat Registration Opens

Camp Habitat is a nature education ecology camp for kids sponsored by Friends of Creamer's Field, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Northern Alaska Environmental Center. Registration for the 2018 season is open, and camp instructors and counselors are being hired. Dates of camp sessions, registration forms, and employment opportunities are online at www.friendsofcreamersfield.org. More information is also available at camphabitat@friendsofcreamersfield.org or 907-750-2298.

1 or * 2 credits optional ED 500

Take a Look!

Sharing Nature and History at Creamer's Field

Enjoy the Outdoors each session




Learn to Share Nature with Visitors to the Refuge
on the trails and in the nature/visitor center




Enjoy the Outdoors each session
April 4 to May 16
(see all details on syllabus)

Wednesday evenings
at Creamer's Farmhouse
6:30 to 8:30pm

Attention Educators:
\$70 for 1, \$90 2 credits

* 2 credit option includes summer enrichment sessions




***Register soon:**
Class limit, 25 participants (for credit)

fill-out a **Registration form** at Creamer's Field in the Farmhouse entryway (back by the Big Barn)
Information: **459-7301** or mark.ross@alaska.gov



Arctic Audubon Society
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National Audubon Society Membership with Chapter 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: _____

City *State* *Zip*

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

Send to: Arctic Audubon Society **A52**
 PO Box 82098
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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.

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