

#### What is the WatchList?

The Alaska WatchList, first published in 2002, identifies birds at risk. Species or subspecies on the WatchList are faced with a combination of population decline, small population size, limited geographic range, or threats to their breeding or wintering habitats or migration stopovers. Subspecies are included because Alaska has unique responsibility for stewardship of these important regional populations.

The WatchList is essentially an early warning system that focuses attention on at-risk populations before they are in jeopardy of extinction. This edition also includes three species occurring in Alaska—Short-tailed Albatross, Steller's Eider, and Spectacled Eider—that are listed as Threatened or Endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Attempting to recover species pushed to the brink of extinction is difficult, costly and controversial. Working cooperatively to protect birds and their habitats before crises arise is far more effective. Hence, the primary aim of the WatchList is to encourage preventative action. Working together and proactively, we can keep common birds common.

The Alaska WatchList is compiled by Audubon Alaska, based on a database created by Partners in Flight, a coalition of state, federal and private-sector biologists, resource managers and conservationists. Data on populations in Alaska are often limited, however, especially for land birds. The WatchList relies on the best existing information, supplemented by local expert opinion.

# Threats to Bird Populations

Around the world, the greatest threat to bird populations is the fragmentation, degradation and loss of their habitats. Over the last century, such losses have often been driven by natural resource extraction, industrial development, and urban encroachment. These days, however, long-term, human-induced climate disruption is having additional dramatic effects on bird habitats on a global scale, especially in the Arctic. Other threats to bird populations include pollution, such as marine oil spills and toxic contaminants, excessive harvest, introduced predators, and increased human disturbance.

In Alaska, we are fortunate that natural ecosystems are still relatively intact and large portions of the landscape are protected in state and federal conservation units. Even in Alaska, however, there are serious concerns about habitat loss, as natural resource development, road building and other human influences intensify and expand into remote areas.

Of course, birds know nothing about state and national boundaries, and migratory species often travel to distant locations where birds and their habitats may not be afforded the same degree of protection as is found in Alaska and the United States. The WatchList calls attention to threats throughout the ranges of Alaska's birds.



# What Can Be Done to Help?

The WatchList identifies species and subspecies that deserve focused monitoring and research, if not special management and protection. It is intended to educate the public about the conservation needs of Alaska's birdlife, and to help decision-makers set management priorities.

Individuals concerned about the future of Alaska's birds should:

- let resource managers and policy-makers know that birds are important to you;
- support habitat conservation in your community and throughout Alaska;
- participate in citizen science projects, like the Christmas Bird Count, that gather valuable information about birds;
- join and contribute to conservation organizations, like the National Audubon Society, that work to protect wild birds and their habitats.

### Acknowledgments

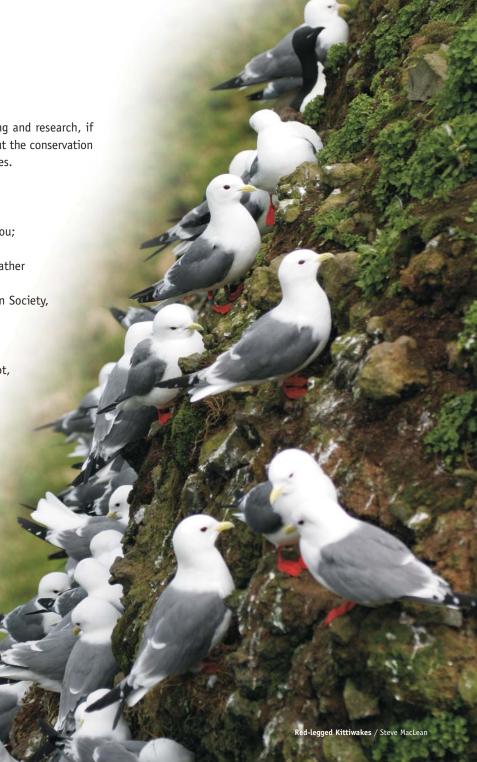
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Spruce Grouse / Milo Burcham





# Alaska WatchList 2005

# Key

#### **Bird Conservation Regions**

- 1 = Aleutian & Bering Sea islands
- 2 = Western Alaska
- **3** = Arctic Plains & Mountains
- 4 = Northwestern Interior Forests
- **5** = Northern Pacific Rainforest

**B**, **b** = occurs in this region as a breeding species

N, n = occurs in this region as a nonbreeding species

(e.g. migrating or wintering)

(lowercase indicate lesser importance)

#### Concerns

**PT** = population trend

**RA** = relative abundance

**BD** = breeding distribution

**TB** = threats during breeding season

**ND** = nonbreeding distribution (migration & winter)

(ND) = nonbreeding distribution primarily outside Alaska

**TN** = threats during nonbreeding season

(TN) = threats during nonbreeding season are outside Alaska

★ Indicates species included on the National Audubon Society's nationwide WatchList, which may be viewed at www.audubon.org

BIRD CONSERVATION REGION

Species & Subspecies

1 2

3 4

Concern

Notes

#### **Loons** - Gaviiformes

Red-throated Loon Gavia stellata	B, n	B, n	В	В, п	B, N	RA, PT, TN, (TN)	Long-term decline S of Brooks Range. Vulnerable to marine oil spills and bycatch by fisheries.
Yellow-billed Loon ★ Gavia adamsii		b	В		N	RA, TB, TN, (TN)	Small global population, much of which breeds on Alaska's N Slope. Vulnerable to marine oil spills and bycatch by fisheries.

#### **Petrels** - Procellariiformes

Short-tailed Albatross *	n	n		n	RA, BD, TN, (TN)	Listed as Endangered in US. Very small population, restricted breeding range. Vulnerable to bycatch
Phoebastria albatrus						by longline fisheries and breeding habitat change.

#### **Cormorants** - Pelecaniformes

Red-faced Cormorant *	В	В	b	b	RA, BD, ND	Small global population, found only in Bering Sea region. Vulnerable to marine oils spills and
Phalacrocorax urile						bycatch by fisheries.

#### Waterfowl - Anseriformes

Trumpeter Swan * Cygnus buccinator			В	В	RA, (TN)	Breeding population increasing in Alaska, but vulnerable to habitat loss & disturbance. Highly sensitive to contaminants.
Greater White-fronted Goose (Tule) Anser albifrons elgasi			В	N	RA, BD, TB, TN, (TN)	Small population breeds on N side of Cook Inlet, restricted stopover site - Bering R Delta. Harvest concern in W states.
Emperor Goose * Chen canagica	N	B, n		n	RA, BD, TB, TN	Small global population. Vulnerable to marine oil spills and winter habitat loss (eelgrass beds).

### Waterfowl continued

Canada Goose (Dusky) Branta canadensis leucopareia					B, N	RA, BD, ND, (TN)	Subspecies breeds only in Copper R Delta. Area was altered by 1964 earthquake, causing habitat change.
Brant * Branta bernicla		B, N	В			PT, TB, TN, (TN)	Small population, decline in wintering areas. Concern over harvest. Vulnerable to disturbance during molt at Teshekpuk Lake on Alaska's N Slope.
Green-winged Teal (Aleutian) Anas crecca nimia	B, N					RA, BD	Subspecies restricted to the Aleutian Islands year-round. Vulnerable to introduced predators, such as rats.
Common Eider Somateria mollissima v-nigrum	b, n	B, N	B, N		n	PT, TB, TN	Long-term decline in breeders in W Alaska, and in spring migrants at Pt Barrow. Highly vulnerable to marine oil spills.
King Eider Somateria spectabilis	N	N	B, N		n	PT, TB, TN	Declining numbers of spring migrants at Pt Barrow. Highly vulnerable to marine oil spills.
Spectacled Eider * Somateria fischeri		B, N	B, N			PT, BD, TB, TN, (TN)	Listed as Threatened in US. Small population, restricted range, steep decline. Vulnerable to marine oil spills and contaminants.
Steller's Eider * Polysticta stelleri	n	B, N	В			RA, PT, BD, TB, TN, (TN)	Listed as Threatened in US. Small population, restricted range, observed decline. Vulnerable to marine oil spills and contaminants.
Black Scoter Melanitta nigra	b, N	В		n	N	PT, TB, TN	Apparent decline in breeders in W Alaska. Vulnerable to marine oil spills, concerns over contaminants.
Long-tailed Duck Clangula hyemalis	b, N	B, N	B, N	b, n	N	PT, TB, TN	Long-term decline, although some recovery in recent years. Vulnerable to marine oil spills and contaminants.

# **Birds of Prey** - Falconiformes

Golden Eagle Aquila chrysaetos	В	В	В			RA, (TN)	Small breeding population in Alaska. Concerns about winter habitat loss in central and W states.
Northern Goshawk (Queen Charlotte) Accipiter gentilis laingi					B, N	RA, BD, ND, TB, TN	Subspecies breeds only in SE Alaska. Highly dependent on old-growth forest habitat.
<b>Gyrfalcon</b> Falco rusticolus	В	В	В	b		RA, PT	Small population with restricted range. Breeding population fluctuates. Declines observed in other parts of range.
Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus anatum; peale; tundrius	В	В	В	В	В	RA, TB, (TN)	Recently removed from federal Endangered Species list. Migrants vulnerable to contaminants outside Alaska.

# **Grouse & Ptarmigan** - Galiiformes

<b>Spruce Grouse (Prince of Wales)</b> Falcipennis canadensis isleibi			B, N	RA, BD, TB, TN	Small population restricted to Prince of Wales Island, SE Alaska. Vulnerable to loss of habitat (old-growth forest).
Rock Ptarmigan (Aleutian) Lagopus mutus nelsoni; atkhensis; townsendi; evermanni	B, N			RA, BD, ND	Small populations with restricted distributions in the Aleutian Islands. Vulnerable to introduced predators, such as rats and foxes.

### **Shorebirds** - Charadriiformes

American Golden-Plover * Pluvialis dominica		В	В	В		PT, (TN)	Small population, decline observed. Vulnerable to winter and staging habitat loss.
Pacific Golden-Plover * Pluvialis fulva	n	B, N	b			RA, BD, ND	Small population breeding exclusively in extreme W and NW Alaska. Winters on small Pacific islands.
Black Oystercatcher * Haematopus bachmani	B, N	B, N			B, N	RA, TB, (TN)	Small breeding population. Vulnerable to disturbance by boats & kayakers at breeding sites, and to marine oil spills.
Wandering Tattler Heteroscelus incanus	b	В	b	В	В	RA, PT	Small breeding population, largely confined to Alaska and Yukon. Vulnerable to wintering habitat loss and oil spills.
Solitary Sandpiper Actitis macularia		В	b	В		RA, PT, BD	Small population, observed decline. Concern over loss of breeding habitat (muskeg/boreal forest).
Whimbrel * Numenius phaeopus rufiventris		В	В	В		RA, TN	Small population with restricted breeding range. Vulnerable to winter habitat loss (inter-tidal mangroves).
Bristle-thighed Curlew * Numenius tahitiensis		B, N				RA, BD, (TN)	Small population. Vulnerable to introduced predators and human disturbance on S Pacific islands in winter.
Marbled Godwit * Limosa fedoa beringiae		B, N			n	RA, BD, TB, TN, (TN)	Small population, breeds only on Alaska Peninsula. Concern over loss of wetland habitat in W coast states & Mexico.
Bar-tailed Godwit * Limosa lapponica baueri		В	В			RA, BD, TN	Small population, highly restricted breeding range. Winters in New Zealand & Australia. Concern over harvest in Asia.
Hudsonian Godwit * Limosa haemastica		B, N		B, N		RA, BD, (TN)	Restricted breeding distribution in Alaska. Concern over loss of winter habitat, primarily in Argentina.
Ruddy Turnstone Arenaria interpres interpres		В	В			RA, BD, TN	Small breeding population in Alaska. Eastern population in decline. Vulnerable to habitat loss and coastal oil spills.
Black Turnstone * Arenaria melanocephala		B, N			N	RA, BD, TB, TN	Restricted breeding distribution. Vulnerable to habitat loss and coastal oil spills, especially during migration.
Surfbird * Aphriza virgata		В	b	В	N	RA, PT, BD, TN	Breeds mainly in Alaska, stages in Prince William Sound. Vulnerable to coastal oil spills, especially during migration.
Rock Sandpiper (Pribilof) * Calidris ptilocnemis ptilocnemis	В			N	N	RA, PT, BD, ND, TB, TN	Subspecies breeds only on central Bering Sea islands. Winters in W Cook Inlet. Vulnerable to coastal oil spills.
Red Knot * Calidris canutus roselaari			В			RA, TB, TN	Small breeding population in Alaska, some evidence of decline. Vulnerable to habitat loss at staging areas.
Sanderling Calidris alba	n		В			PT, TN	Rare breeder in Alaska, some winter in the Aleutian Islands. Decline observed throughout range. Vulnerable to coastal oil spills.
<b>Dunlin</b> Calidris alpina		B, N	В		N	RA, PT, BD, TN	Decline documented. Vulnerable to coastal oil spills and winter habitat loss.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper * Tryngites subruficollis			В			RA, PT, TB, (TN)	Small population. Breeding overlaps with oil fields. Concern over loss of winter habitat, primarily in Argentina.

Concern

#### Notes

# **Seabirds** - Charadriiformes

Red-legged Kittiwake * Rissa brevirostris	B, n				RA, BD, PT	Long-term decline. Small population, breeds primarily on the Pribilof Islands. Vulnerable to marine regime shifts.
Aleutian Tern Sterna aleutica	В	В		В	RA, BD, PT	Breeds only in small, scattered colonies. Believed to be declining. Vulnerable to marine regime shifts.
Marbled Murrelet * Brachyramphus marmoratus	b, n	B, n	b, n	B, n	PT, BD, TB	Listed as Threatened in Pacific NW. Vulnerable to loss of breeding habitat (old-growth forest).
Kittlitz's Murrelet * Brachyramphus brevirostris	b	В	b	B, N	RA, PT, BD, TB	Small, declining population, highly associated with tidewater glaciers. Vulnerable to habitat loss due to climate change, and disturbance in foraging areas.
Whiskered Auklet ★ Aethia pygmaea	В, п				RA, BD	Breeds only in Bering Sea region. Vulnerable to introduced predators, such as rats, and marine regime shifts.

# **Owls** - Strigiformes

Short-eared Owl *	b	В	В	В	В	RA, TB, TN, (TN)	Declines observed throughout range. Vulnerable to habitat loss, nest predation, and persecution.
Asio flammeus							

# **Perching Birds** - Passeriformes

Olive-sided Flycatcher * Contopus cooperi		В		В	В	PT, TB, (TN)	Breeding population declining broadly across N America. Concern over loss of wintering habitat in the tropics.
Blackpoll Warbler Dendroica striata		В		В	b	PT, TB, (TN)	Breeding population declining broadly across N America. Concern over loss of wintering habitat in the tropics.
Song Sparrow (Aleutian) Melospiza melodia maxima	B, N					RA, BD, TB, TN	Subspecies confined to central and W Aleutian Islands. Vulnerable to introduced predators, such as rats and foxes.
Smith's Longspur Calcarius pictus			В	В		RA, BD, (TN)	Small breeding population. Restricted to S Great Plains in winter.
McKay's Bunting * Plectrophenax hyperboreus		B, N				RA, BD, TB	Small population, breeds only on St. Matthew Island and winters in W Alaska.
Rusty Blackbird * Euphagus carolinus		В	b	В	В	RA, PT, TB, (TN)	Small population in low densities. Steep decline across range. Vulnerable to habitat loss (muskeg/boreal forest).

Red-faced Cormorant / Ralph Wright



Marbled Murrelet / Milo Burcham

Short-eared Owl / Milo Burcham











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