

Dear Audubon Alaska Friend,

I hope you enjoy this issue of Audubon Alaska's e-news. In this email:

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1. Tongass Limerick Challenge: CONTEST ENDS MONDAY, MAY 3

It's the Tongass — why should we care?
The forest is ancient and rare!
In addition to that,
It's prime habitat
For the burly and awesome _____ .

If you can correctly fill in the blanks for the limerick above, and two more limericks like it, you can win a free copy of the beautiful book, [Salmon in the Trees](#). This book of essays, photographs, and drawings of the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska includes a chapter by Audubon's own John Schoen and a CD of sound recordings by Richard Nelson. Clues for all three fill-in-the-blank limericks are found in our [Tongass video](#).

Better yet, [write your own Tongass limerick](#), and win the book *plus* one of Amy Gulick's signed prints from the book! The winning original limerick will be printed in our newsletter and in this e-newsletter.

You can find full contest rules, the three limerick riddles, and our Tongass video here: <http://ak.audubon.org/issues-action/tongass-national-forest-video-tour>. **Remember, contest ends Monday, May 3!**

2. Announcing Audubon Alaska's New Executive Director!

It's the news you've been waiting to hear! I am so excited to introduce you to Audubon Alaska's new Executive Director, **Dr. Nils Warnock**.



Nils has a PhD in Ecology from the University of California at Davis and San Diego State University. He is currently a Wildlife Specialist for the Oiled Wildlife Care Network at UC Davis, a Research Associate with Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) Conservation Science, and an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Wildlife at Humboldt State University. Prior to his work at UC Davis, Nils was the Co-Director of the Wetlands Ecology Division at PRBO for nine years, where he managed a staff and budget similar to Audubon Alaska's. He has published extensively on the ecology of shorebirds, including more than 50 scientific articles in peer-reviewed books and journals, as well as articles in popular magazines such as *Natural History* and *Birding*.

Nils has considerable experience in Alaska and has conducted research on shorebirds and other birds like the Spectacled Eider at various locations in the state, including the North Slope, Seward Peninsula, Yukon-Kuskokwim (YK) Delta, and Copper River Delta. Nils recently worked with colleagues from the US Geological Survey and US Fish and Wildlife Service to use satellite telemetry tags to track migration of Bar-tailed Godwits and Bristle-thighed Curlews from breeding grounds in Alaska to sites as far away as New Zealand. These flights are non-stop for distances up to 6,000 miles! Nils says this research made him appreciate the importance of food-rich coastal habitats like the YK Delta. In his own words: "I see the Audubon Alaska job not only as an exciting opportunity for me, but also a tremendous opportunity to help guide and facilitate conservation action on issues that are dear to my heart, such as the protection of critical staging habitat for migrating birds."

Nils will officially start with Audubon on June 14. His wife, Sarah, a scientist and teacher, and his two children, Noah and Anna, will join Nils in Anchorage in July. **But you can meet him sooner than that! Nils is the keynote speaker for this year's [Copper River Shorebird Festival](#) in Cordova.** You can catch his talk on Friday, May 7 at 7:30 p.m. in the Cordova High School Gym, where he'll be discussing *Wings over Borders—The Amazing Migration of Shorebirds*. And stay tuned for a welcome party for Nils in Anchorage in the coming months.

3. Take Action: Submit Your Comments by Friday for Continued Protection of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge

The [Izembek National Wildlife Refuge](#) on the Alaska Peninsula is one of the world's most critically important northern wetlands for migrating birds. Virtually all of the world's Pacific Brant stop at Izembek to rest and feed during migration. Nesting Tundra Swans and hundreds of thousands of geese and shorebirds, as well as threatened species, such as Steller's Eiders, use the Izembek wetlands.

But Izembek may not remain a safe refuge from development. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is considering a land exchange and road proposal through the biological heart of Izembek and is now accepting scoping comments as it prepares an Environmental Impact Statement. Audubon opposes the proposal because the road would cut through the biological heart of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, and the land swap would sacrifice key habitats (206 acres of critical, internationally recognized wildlife habitat) in exchange for a larger amount of less important habitat.

Audubon's position: the wildlife values of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge are globally significant and should not be compromised, particularly when there are other, reasonable alternatives for addressing transportation between King Cove and Cold Bay.

Comments are due Friday, April 30! [Please submit your comments today](#) through our easy online form, and [find more information here](#) (including [key points](#) and a [sample letter](#)). Thanks for supporting conservation!

4. Spring Birding: Festivals, Maps, eBird, and More

Are you excited for spring birding? Audubon has resources to help you get ready:

Anchorage, Kodiak, and Fairbanks Birding Maps: Compiled by local experts from Audubon chapters, these maps will help you figure out where to go birding, how to get there, and what species you might find there. Purchasing information is at <http://ak.audubon.org/birds-science-education/alaska-birding-maps>.

Birding festivals around the state: There are fun birding festivals across the state this spring, and you can find Audubon at most of them. Float the Kenai River with Audubon's Beth Peluso at the Kenai festival; listen to our Director of Bird Conservation, Matt Kirchhoff, talk about seabirds at the

Homer festival; meet our new Executive Director, Nils, at the Cordova festival; and check out Audubon stations at Potter Marsh Day and the International Migratory Bird Festival. Check out the full schedule here: <http://ak.audubon.org/events/1595>. This schedule is a work-in-progress; let us know which Alaska birding events we missed, and we'll add them to the list!

Potter Marsh Spring Podcast: We've just posted the spring edition of the Potter Marsh Audio Tour on our website. Go to www.audubonalaska.org, and click on the link in the left-hand column.

Don't forget [Alaska eBird](#): Alaska eBird is not only your tool to contribute your daily bird sightings to conservation and science; it's a fabulous tool to find birds! You can use eBird to map and chart your own sightings—and find out what others are seeing and where. I've heard rave reviews of [BirdsEye](#), the new iPhone app that uses “location technology” and eBird data to show you the recent bird sightings near you! Sounds like mandatory Birdathon equipment to me. Speaking of which...

5. Who Says Birders are Competitive? (Support Audubon Alaska's Birdathon)

It's Team Kingbird versus Team All-for-Knot! But watch out for that dark horse, Team Swift!

Birders can be a competitive lot, and here at Audubon Alaska, the Birdathon whets our competitive instincts like nothing else.

[What is the Birdathon?](#) It's like a walkathon or a telethon, but the goal is to raise money for conservation by finding birds—as many species as possible within a 24-hour period. You get sponsors to pledge you for every species you see (e.g., \$1 or \$2 per species), or even just a flat amount. Some sponsors get really creative by pledging more for WatchList species, for their favorite birds, or even for miles hiked. Across America, folks use the Birdathon as their excuse to get outside, get competitive, have fun, and raise critical funds for Audubon. Here in Alaska, we often have 7 or more Birdathon teams each spring raising money for Audubon Alaska and/or a local Audubon chapter. Who does the Birdathon? Audubon Alaska staff, board, chapter volunteers—the event is open to anyone.

You can join the fun this year! If you'd like to do a Birdathon yourself, send me an email, and I'll get you started with materials and tips. Or, support an existing Birdathon team: in fact, if you haven't already sponsored your favorite Birdathon team, I invite you to sponsor me when I go birding on May 24 with the All-Audubon Team. Just reply to this email with your challenging pledge, and I'll email you after my Birdathon with a full report, a species list, and the amount of your tax-deductible gift. You can also just make a flat donation any time at <https://loon.audubon.org/payment/donate/AKBirdatho.html>.

I said our goal was to raise money for conservation... the other goal is to NOT get the dreaded Rubber Chicken Trophy. Team Kingbird got it last year, Team All-for-Knot the year before that. Confused? Scroll down for pictures. The trophy's plaque reads: “Audubon Alaska Birdathon Second Place. Nice try. Maybe next year.”

Thanks for reading Audubon Alaska's e-news! I welcome your comments and questions by email (lcosta@audubon.org) or by phone (907-276-7034).

With friendly regards,
Lorelei

PS Help us spread the word; please forward this email to a friend.



Above Left: The dreaded Rubber Chicken Trophy (left), all dolled up for 2010, which is awarded to Audubon Alaska's second-place Birdathon team.

Above Right: The beaming Eric Myers from victorious Team All-for-Knot passing the Rubber Chicken to good sport Matt Kirchhoff from Team Kingbird after the 2009 Birdathon. Who says birders are competitive?

Top Photograph: Dr. Nils Warnock with a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on Alaska's YK Delta, Photo by Åke Lindström

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