

Dear Friend,

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

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1. Roadless Rule Reinstated in the Tongass!

On March 4, 2011, US District Judge John W. Sedwick reinstated the Roadless Rule in Alaska's Tongass National Forest, restoring protection for about **9 million acres of roadless areas!** The Roadless Rule was created in 2001 by the Clinton Administration and originally applied to all US National Forests, but the Bush Administration singled out the Tongass in 2003, making it the only National Forest exempt from the rule. Judge Sedwick found that the Bush Administration's reasons for the exemption were "implausible" and "contrary to the evidence in the record."

What to make of this? "This is a fantastic **victory for conservation**," says Eric Myers, Audubon Alaska's Policy Director. "The challenge before us now is to make this protection as durable as possible. We also want to ensure that significant watersheds in roaded areas are permanently protected, including places on Prince of Wales Island. Due to heavy logging in the past, this island ecosystem is still at risk, even with the reinstated Roadless Rule."

To learn more about the Tongass and view a gallery of maps, check out our Tongass Conservation Assessment at <http://home.gci.net/~tnc/>.

2. WatchList Trivia (*PRIZES for three winners*)

The competition for the WatchList Trivia has been getting intense, so I'm relaxing the rules. For your chance at our fabulous prizes, **email me (LCosta@audubon.org) by Thursday, March 31, 5:00 p.m. Alaska time**, with your answer to the following:

Of all the species on the [2010 Alaska WatchList](#), which two have the largest global populations, estimated at 20 and 30 million, respectively?

Hint: You might wonder why these two species are even on the Alaska WatchList. Sadly, their populations are declining at rates of 2.6% and 3–4% annually, so although the two species are still relatively common today, the trends are quite worrisome. One of Audubon's goals is to keep common birds common, so we can prevent birds from becoming threatened or endangered or extinct.

Three winners, selected at random from the pool of correct answers, will receive a free **[Anchorage Birding Map](#)** and a free **singing, plush bird** (your choice of Mallard, Osprey, Robin, Kingfisher, or Great Horned Owl). Good luck!

3. Take Action: Urge Caution on Oil/Gas Leasing in the Arctic Ocean

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement is [seeking public input](#) for its forthcoming Environmental Impact Statement for the five-year Outer Continental Shelf oil

and gas leasing program for 2012–2017. This is our chance to urge the agency to **slow down** its rush to open the Arctic Ocean to oil and gas drilling.

Take action! Public comments are due Thursday, March 31, 2011.

Audubon is advocating that the agency defer leasing in the Arctic Ocean until 1) a comprehensive research and monitoring plan is in place, and 2) effective spill response capabilities have been demonstrated. **The terrible Gulf Oil Spill taught us that large spills can and do happen.** Drilling in Alaska's Arctic Ocean is even riskier, with its ice-choked waters and notoriously stormy weather. There is no demonstrated ability to clean up spills in the icy waters of the Arctic Ocean, and the nearest Coast Guard station is 1,000 miles away!

To submit comments, go to <http://www.audubonaction.org/site/Advocacy?id=991> for easy submission. We've included sample text, which you can send as-is or rewrite in your own words.

Additional Resources:

- The agency's [website](#) for the 2012–2017 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Environmental Impact Statement
- Audubon Alaska's [Arctic Marine Atlas](#) (cool maps!)
- Our [fact sheet](#) on oil spill response capabilities in the Arctic Ocean
- [Make a donation](#) to support Audubon Alaska's work

4. Festivals, Field Trips, and Other Spring Events

Spring's almost here, so we've updated our [calendar of Alaska bird festivals](#). I hope you can participate in one of these fun fairs:

- [Ketchikan Hummingbird Festival](#) (throughout April)
- [Copper River Shorebird Festival](#) (May 5–8)
- [Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival](#) (May 5–8)
- [Kenai River Birding Festival](#) (May 19–22)
- Many more events are listed at <http://ak.audubon.org/events/2338>. And please, if we missed a public birding festival somewhere in Alaska, [let us know](#), and we'll add it to our webpage.

Also be sure to check with your [local Audubon chapter](#) for their schedules of field trips and public lectures. Coming in April: [Berners Bay Cruises](#) with Juneau Audubon, and the [Gunsight Mountain Hawk Watch Weekend](#) with Anchorage Audubon.

Volunteers Needed! Audubon Alaska is looking for volunteers to help staff our tables at [International Migratory Bird Day](#) (May 15 at the Alaska Zoo) and [Potter Marsh Discovery Day](#) (June 11). Volunteers will help kids and adults learn how to use binoculars, spotting scopes, and field guides. If you would like to join the festivities, please contact Beth Peluso at 907-276-7034 or by email at bpeluso@audubon.org.

By the way, if you haven't had a chance yet to meet [Nils Warnock](#), our new Executive Director, please join us on **Thursday, April 21 at 7:00 p.m. at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage** for Anchorage Audubon's monthly meeting. Nils will give a talk on shorebird migration and touch on Audubon Alaska's projects and priorities.

5. Arctic Refuge Birding Challenge: The Bar Is Set *(Can you beat 87 species?)*

Congratulations to the **Mississippi Team** for winning our [first-ever Arctic Refuge Birding Challenge](#)! This fall, teams across the country searched for birds in their home states to spot species from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge checklist—many of these species migrate between the Arctic Refuge and the birders' home states. From September 1 through December 1, 2010, the Mississippi Team found 87 species, including Snow Goose, American Golden-Plover, Northern Pintail, and Red Phalarope.

Teams from Alabama and Kansas racked up second and third place winnings, respectively.

"Most people wouldn't think of Mississippi and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the same sentence," says Beth Peluso, Communications Manager for Audubon Alaska, "but the two places are directly connected by the birds that nest or stage in the Arctic and make the long journey to winter in Mississippi."

Want to try to beat the Mississippi Team? You have a chance now, with spring migration! Recruit your team (up to six people), identify your birds (by sight or sound), record the species on our [checklist](#), and submit your list by midnight (Alaska time) May 31, 2011. The bar has been set, but even if you don't beat 87 species, submit your list anyway—we'll have prizes for first, second, and third places!

For full contest details, go to

http://ak.audubon.org/files/Audubon%20Alaska/documents/Arctic_birding_challenge_flyer_spring_2011.pdf.



Thanks to [Milo Burcham](#) for this beautiful picture of a Red Phalarope!

And thanks to you for reading Audubon Alaska's e-news. I welcome your comments and questions by email (LCosta@audubon.org) or by phone (907-276-7034).

Wishing you a verdant and vibrant spring,
Lorelei

PS You've received this email because, at one point or another, you shared your email address with Audubon. If you'd rather not receive emails from me, just let me know.

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