

Dear Friend,

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

1. **Bid for Birds: Audubon Alaska's Birdathon** (*Pledge or Donate Now!*)
2. **Shell Submits Drilling Plans for Beaufort and Chukchi Seas**
3. **"Where Should I Go Birding?"**
4. **WatchList Trivia** (*with PRIZES for first three correct answers*)
5. **Cool New Maps on our Website!**

### 1. Bid for Birds: Audubon Alaska's Birdathon (*Pledge or Donate Now!*)

The quest begins before dawn: a groggy band of birders, gulping coffee by the mug, ears and eyes craning, stalking the first singing songbirds of the early morning.

All through the day, they'll search woods, marshes, tundra, mud flats, cliffs, ponds, fields, parks. With field guides in hand, tide charts in pocket, calories and caffeine in packs, and binoculars never far from their faces, they will visit dozens of birding spots and hike for miles upon miles in a mission to find birds. When the long day closes, they'll be desperately seeking any last species that has evaded them, squinting through scopes to find that one final bird before midnight.

To what end do these sleep-deprived seekers search for birds? I am describing, of course, **Audubon Alaska's Birdathon**, a fun (and exhausting!) annual fundraiser for conservation.

The goal is to find as many birds as possible in just 24 hours—and get sponsors to pledge your team for every bird you see or hear. **And it's all for a great cause: to support Audubon's programs to conserve birds, other wildlife, and their habitats in Alaska.**

If you haven't yet made a pledge or donation for your favorite Birdathon team this year, please consider supporting Audubon Alaska's Birdathon by sponsoring Team Bar Tale. Led by our intrepid Executive Director, Nils Warnock, Team Bar Tale will scour land and water for 24 hours in hopes of finding as many bird species as possible.

**Why not challenge Team Bar Tale with a pledge for each species they find—perhaps 50¢, \$1, or \$3 per species?** Better yet, give them a special challenge with an extra pledge for [Alaska WatchList species](#), life birds, or any creative spin you can conceive.

**To make a pledge, just reply to this email...** then after the Birdathon, we'll send you a report of the Big Day, a list and number of the species we found, and the amount of your donation.

Or, [make a flat donation now with our secure online form.](#)

Thanks for sponsoring the Birdathon! Please wish our birders good luck.

### 2. New Proposals (Again!) to Drill in the Arctic

Just in the past two weeks, there have been a host of new, revisited, upgraded, and/or accelerated proposals for drilling in America's Arctic. Last Thursday, May 12, Royal Dutch Shell submitted a new Exploration Plan to the federal government to drill up to six new wells in Alaska's Chukchi Sea over the next two years. This follows the company's May 4 Exploration Plan to drill another four wells in the adjacent Beaufort Sea.

Then on Saturday, in his [weekly address](#), President Barack Obama announced that his administration would accelerate domestic oil production by annually auctioning oil/gas leases onshore in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve in the Western Arctic. Audubon Alaska's Eric Myers, [quoted in the New York Times](#), said conservationists were willing to see an increase in drilling in the Reserve as long as it did not threaten wildlife, waters, or sensitive lands.

Our stance on offshore drilling is more cautious. Drilling in the Arctic Ocean presents unprecedented risks, and the nearest Coast Guard station is 1,000 miles away. Audubon's position is that drilling offshore in the Arctic should not proceed until there is a demonstrated ability to effectively respond.

And apparently, many of you agree. In my last e-newsletter, I asked you to submit your comments to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement for their forthcoming plan for offshore oil/gas leasing. Thanks to everyone who did! More than 265,000 people—members of Audubon and many other groups—submitted comments to urge caution on oil/gas leasing in the Arctic Ocean! It amazes me that so many people would take time from their busy lives to comment. Thank you for adding your voice to this groundswell. [To read Audubon's official comments, click here.](#)

You can be sure that Audubon will review all of these proposals carefully and provide comment, maps, and biological expertise to regulators at every opportunity.

### 3. "Where Should I Go Birding?"

If you're looking for suggestions on where to go birding in Alaska, check out the links below. Maybe you're an Alaskan who's new to birding, or maybe you're visiting Alaska this summer and need ideas for where to find a lifer. Or maybe you're a seasoned birder, just looking for new hotspots, the latest sightings, or camaraderie on the trail.

Here is a list of Alaska birding festivals, chapter field trips, maps, hotlines, listserves, and other resources to help you plan your next birding trip in Alaska.

#### Festivals and Field Trips:

- [Kenai Peninsula Birding Festival](#) (May 19–22)
- [Yakutat Tern Festival](#) (June 2–5)
- [Potter Marsh Discovery Day](#) (June 11, family-friendly)
  - Volunteers needed for Pottery Marsh Discovery Day! Please [email Beth Peluso](#) if you can help staff the Audubon booth.
- [Anchorage Audubon Field Trips](#) (must do: Potter Marsh Smack-a-Thon on June 12!)
- [Arctic Audubon Field Trips](#) (in and around Fairbanks)
- [Juneau Audubon Field Trips](#)
- [Kodiak Audubon Field Trips](#) (go to page 12 for field trips)
- [Even more birding festivals](#)

#### Other Birding Resources:

- How to purchase [birding maps](#) for Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Kodiak
- [Alaska eBird](#): Find birding hotspots, peruse local sightings, and contribute your bird lists to citizen science
- Directory of [birding hotlines and listserves](#) in Alaska
- Find your [local Audubon chapter](#)
- List and descriptions of [Important Bird Areas in Alaska](#)

### 4. WatchList Trivia (with PRIZES for first three correct answers)

I will send a free [Anchorage Birding Map](#) AND a free **singing, plush bird** to the first three people who email me ([LCosta@audubon.org](mailto:LCosta@audubon.org)) with the correct answer to this question:

***Which species on the [Alaska WatchList](#) nests primarily on volcanic islands in Japan but forages in Alaska waters during the non-breeding season?***

This seabird has an amazing story of survival! It once numbered in the millions, but was decimated by plume and egg hunters in the late 1800s and early 1900s. After the few remaining birds' nesting habitat was damaged by volcanic eruptions, the species was thought to be extinct. Luckily, a few juvenile birds at sea survived, eventually returning to Toroshima Island to nest. Today, this species has an estimated population of just 2,400 birds and is still threatened by volcanic disruption in its nesting habitat and long-line fishing in Alaska waters.

### **5. Cool New Maps on our Website!**

We have just added 49 very cool new maps of the Western Arctic to our website. You may be familiar with our Western Arctic Synthesis from 2002; these new maps are the latest, updated versions of the maps from 2002, revised with as much new data as we could collect, including caribou collar data, new energy infrastructure and lease sales, and new North Slope bird survey data.

Included are maps of wolf densities, caribou habitat in relation to coal, breeding densities for Yellow-billed Loons, areas of highest potential for gas, distribution of raptor nest sites, and many more.

**[Check them out!](#)**



Quick plug: PBS has a new series on its [Nature](#) program called “**Bears of the Last Frontier**,” which follows adventurer and bear biologist Chris Morgan on a year-long motorcycle odyssey deep into Alaska's bear country. The third episode features grizzly and polar bears of Alaska's North Slope—including the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska. You can catch a **free screening at the Blue Loon in Fairbanks on Sunday, May 22 at 6:00 pm**, or check your local listings to watch at home. Photograph of grizzly bear by Dave Shreffler.

Thank you for reading Audubon Alaska's e-news. I welcome your comments and questions by email ([LCosta@audubon.org](mailto:LCosta@audubon.org)) or by phone (907-276-7034).

Wishing you happy birding this 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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