

September 2011

Dear Friend,

Fall has swept across Alaska in a blanket of brilliant yellows and reds. Ducks and geese are performing test flights in V's above Anchorage. Sparrows and other songbirds still skulk in the trees and shrubs, but the days are numbered before they head to warmer climates. In this Audubon Alaska E-news, learn more about where Alaska birds go, National Audubon education programs highlighting Alaska, and how you can upgrade your field guides to digital.

1. **Mapping the Winged Connection**
2. **Alaska Birds: The Next Generation**
3. **NEW Audubon Alaska publication**
4. **Alaska Grizzlies under Pressure**
5. **Birds on the Go—Audubon Smartphone Apps**
6. **Two Audubon Members Win Conservation Awards**
7. **WatchList Quiz**

Mapping the Winged Connection

Where do Alaska birds go when they leave at the end of the breeding season? This new [map of Banded Birds from Alaska](#), created by Audubon Alaska's Landscape Ecologist Melanie Smith, shows the locations of where 56,500 birds banded in Alaska were spotted on their travels. The information on locations of banded birds is from the US Geological Survey. The birds cover an impressive range of continents.

Researchers attach numeric or unique combinations of color leg bands to birds so they can track an individual bird. For some large waterfowl, such as swans, researchers use collars instead of bands. For large soaring birds, such as golden eagles, researchers may use large number tags attached to the wings. If you spot a banded bird or find a band, report it to the US Geological Survey [North American Bird Banding Program](#).

Banding helps us understand where birds migrate, where they may stop along the way, and where they spend the winter away from Alaska. Finding these locations is essential to maintaining healthy bird populations. If there is habitat loss at stopover sites along migration routes or on wintering grounds, it affects the populations of birds in Alaska. Our new map also shows how critical Alaska is to birds worldwide.

Sandhill Cranes gather in large flocks before migrating, like these cranes at Creamer's Field Important Bird Area in Fairbanks, Alaska. At the Fairbanks Sandhill Crane Festival in late August, volunteers spotted at least one banded crane.



Alaska Birds: The Next Generation

We're excited to announce that Alaska wildlife will be the focus of two National Audubon education campaigns for kids: Pennies for the Planet and Audubon Adventures. Audubon Alaska staff worked closely with National Audubon to create materials that will bring Alaska animals to life for classrooms across the country.

Pennies for the Planet is a powerful tool for motivating young people to learn about and become engaged in protecting biodiversity. Each school year, Pennies for the Planet selects three Audubon conservation projects to highlight. Students learn about the habitats and wildlife each project strives to protect, and come up with creative ways to raise funds to help. This year, Audubon Alaska's project to map wildlife uses of the Arctic Ocean won one of the three coveted slots. (The other two are Texas' Sabal Palm Forest and North Carolina's Barrier Islands.) Students have raised more than \$90,000 through Audubon's Pennies for the Planet in the past three years.

[Pennies for the Planet materials](#), including a full color poster, educators' guide, and a participation form with incentives and awards, are available for download for classroom or at-home use.

Audubon Adventures is Audubon's award-winning environmental education program for grades 3–5. One unit of this year's edition focuses on Alaska's wide range of ecosystems, from the temperate rainforest of Southeast Alaska to the treeless tundra of the Arctic Coast. With engaging illustrations, fun facts, and a variety of activities, Audubon Adventures materials will reach approximately 150,000 schoolchildren. The Alaska resource kit includes an inviting and informative "newspaper" for kids, suggestions for student activities, and a teacher curriculum packet. To make the program more useful for teachers, the activities are designed to fulfill national education standards. To learn more, go to the [Audubon Adventures website](#).

NEW Audubon Alaska Publication

Our newest publication [“Striking a Balance in America’s Western Arctic: The National Petroleum Reserve–Alaska”](#) provides a crash course in the importance of the largest public land unit in the United States for migratory birds, caribou, and other wildlife. It also gives highlights of Audubon’s science-based conservation recommendations. If you would like a print copy (or more than one to share!), contact Beth Peluso at bpeluso@audubon.org or (907) 276-7034.

Alaska Grizzlies under Pressure

Before he retired from being Audubon Alaska’s Senior Scientist, John Schoen worked on a critical examination of how the Alaska Department of Fish and Game intensively manages the state’s grizzly population. The paper [“Trends in Intensive Management of Alaska’s Grizzly Bears, 1980–2010”](#) that John wrote with three co-authors appeared in a recent edition of the prestigious *Journal of Wildlife Management*. For more on the controversial history of grizzly management in Alaska, read the [Alaska Dispatch](#) story.

Birds on the Go—Audubon Smartphone Apps

Did you know you can get Audubon nature guide apps for your smartphone? The Audubon Bird Guide includes photos, sounds, and natural history for each species, a variety of ways to search the guide, plus the ability to keep track of your sightings. Watch for special deals on Audubon guides: you can download [Audubon Mushrooms— A Field Guide to North American Mushrooms](#) through Monday 10/3/11 for \$4.99 (regularly \$9.99). It will be available on the Apple App Store, Android Market, and the Amazon App Store. Or you can [peruse other Audubon Guide apps](#). You can also search for “Audubon” in your app store.

Two Audubon Members Win Conservation Awards

The untiring dedication of volunteers and supporters of Audubon is what makes it possible to protect the places that birds need to thrive. The Alaska Conservation Foundation recognized Audubon members Bob Armstrong and Stacy Studebaker for their contributions to conservation at its recent 2011 award ceremony.



Bob Armstrong won the Daniel Housberg Wilderness Image Award for Excellence in Still Photography, Film or Video. For more than 50 years, Bob has reached hundreds of thousands of people and helped them to understand and appreciate Alaska’s wildlife and the need for conservation through his photography. He has published more than 14 books and scores of magazine articles featuring his spectacular images of Alaska’s birds, mammals, fish, insects, and plants. His book, *Guide to the Birds of Alaska*, is now in its fifth edition and is considered the definitive field guide on Alaska’s

birds. His contagious enthusiasm for Alaska's wildlife continues to draw people to his images, which he generously shares for education and conservation. [More of Bob's amazing photography can be found online.](#)

Stacy Studebaker won the Celia Hunter Award for Outstanding Volunteer Contributions. Stacy is one of the founding members of the Kodiak Audubon chapter, serving as president of the chapter from 1999 to 2004. She successfully fought illegal filling of a half-acre of Kodiak's Pasagshak River and collaborated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to nominate Important Bird Areas in Kodiak now recognized as globally significant for threatened bird species habitat conservation. She is the co-author of Kodiak Audubon's *Hiking and Birding Guide* and author of a new field guide on Southcentral Alaska flora. Stacy has been recognized twice by the National Audubon Society—once in 2004, with a Presidential Service Award for Outstanding Chapter Leadership, and again in 2006, with a "Together Green—Green Hero" Award.



Congratulations Bob Armstrong and Stacy Studebaker!

WatchList QUIZ

What [Alaska WatchList](#) species is endemic to three groups of islands in the southern Bering Sea?

HINT: These small, silver-eyed seabirds are a target for dedicated birders looking to expand their life-list.

PRIZES: A hard copy of our new publication "Striking a Balance in America's Western Arctic" and an Important Bird Area pin for your favorite birding jacket or backpack.

Email your answer to me at bpeluso@audubon.org by October 7, and I'll do a drawing for three prizewinners!

Thank you for reading Audubon Alaska's e-newsletter. I welcome your comments and questions by email (bpeluso@audubon.org) or by phone (907-276-7034).

Happy birding,
Beth Peluso

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