



# Audubon ALASKA News

Published twice a year by the Alaska State Office of the National Audubon Society

## Mapping the Future of the Arctic Ocean

In mid-March, President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau announced the two countries “must and will play a leadership role internationally in the low carbon global economy over the coming decades, including through science-based steps to protect the Arctic and its peoples.” The statement also affirmed national goals of protecting 10 percent of Arctic marine areas by 2020. This clearly-stated intent to use science to inform management decisions underscores the need for a publication such as our *Ecological Atlas of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas*.

In 2010, Audubon Alaska published the first edition of this ecological atlas, titled the *Arctic Marine Synthesis*, containing the most current, complete maps for the US Arctic Ocean, earning us a reputation as an authority on Arctic marine spatial data. Since then, there has been a renaissance of new Arctic scientific research. Starting last fall, Audubon Alaska increased our science team to tackle expanding the second edition. In addition to new US Chukchi and Beaufort Seas information, this edition will include more of the Canadian Beaufort Sea as well as the Bering Sea.

### How to Create an Atlas

Learning how our science team works together is the best way to map out how the atlas comes to life.

Melanie Smith is Audubon Alaska’s Director of Conservation Science and author of the first edition. “One of my roles is acting as the senior ecologist, making sure the final product is accurate, credible, compelling, and meaningful to the users.” Melanie is the leader of our science team: Max Goldman, Erika Knight, and Ben Sullender. In addition to our in-house staff, we are working with Oceana, Pew Charitable Trusts, and other contractors to contribute data, writing, and cartographic design.

The first step is figuring out what new data we need to add, who has it, and how to get it. Max Goldman is our Arctic Marine Ecologist. Max is the lead writer for the report accompanying the maps and the lead facilitator of project communications. He works closely with Erika, Melanie, and Ben to acquire the data that serves as a foundation for the maps. Max reports that the first edition of the atlas helped pave the way with some researchers. “One seal biologist told me ‘I love the atlas!’” Max said. “He constantly uses it as a reference, so he was very willing to supply data.”

*continued on page 3*

Polar bears are a moving target for mapping—not only do the bears migrate, their sea ice habitat drifts as well.

*Photograph by Dave Shaw*



## ALASKA WATCHLIST SPECIES

### Buff-breasted Sandpiper

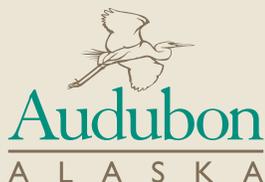
*Calidris subruficollis*

The Buff-breasted Sandpiper is a Red List WatchList species. The population plummeted from millions of birds to near extinction by 1920 due to market hunting and habitat loss. The conversion of grasslands to agriculture in South American wintering grounds contributes to its ongoing decline. In Alaska, these sandpipers breed only along the Arctic coastal plain, including the Arctic Refuge. Males “dance” to attract females, opening one or both wings to show the snowy white linings. Protecting the Arctic Refuge is one step in helping this fascinating shorebird.

*Photograph on masthead by Dave Shaw*

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For almost 40 years Audubon Alaska has worked to conserve Alaska's birds, wildlife, and the habitat crucial to them. Audubon Alaska is financially independent, raising all our own funding—this means your support is critical to protecting the birds and wildlife you care about.

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## DIRECTOR'S VIEWPOINT

# A Crisis for Alaska Seabirds

*By Nils Warnock*

Have you ever been on a boat trip in Alaskan waters and had someone yell out "Look, a penguin!?" If you are a birder, you know that 99 percent of the time these penguins turn out to be the stately, plump Common Murre, a marine bird that occurs in Alaska in staggering numbers (with its cousin, the Thick-billed Murre). Of an estimated 13–21 million Common Murres that breed in northern waters worldwide, more than 2.5 million nest in Alaska, usually in dense colonies on steep, rocky island faces. Large breeding colonies numbering more than 100,000 birds each dot the islands and coastline of the Bering Sea, and many of these sites are Important Bird Areas. Take a boat trip out of Seward, Homer, or Sitka, and you are likely to encounter rafts of thousands of murres flying around and feeding in the coastal waters, black-and-white feathered bodies massed together and moving in seemingly disorganized yet coordinated flocks.



**A murre too weak to fly.**

*Photograph by Robin Corcoran  
US Fish and Wildlife Service*

However, over the past months it has been hard to ignore that something is not right in the world of Alaskan Common Murres (among other species). Beginning in the spring of 2015, reports began filtering in, especially from the Prince William Sound region, of hundreds to thousands of murres being found dead on single beaches. Bald Eagles, Common Ravens, and a host of other species were observed feasting on dead and dying murres. This fall, multiple observations of murres in peculiar places came in. Thanksgiving Day, I was driving on the highway outside of Palmer north of Anchorage when I spotted a murre about 30 feet above my car, flying towards the snow-covered Chugach Mountains. I almost drove off the road! Just after the new year in January 2016, in Anchorage where Common Murres are a relatively rare sighting (and never in January), I caught one beautiful but emaciated murre at Westchester Lagoon. Into the new year, starving murres were being observed in unusual locations (e.g. far up icy rivers in interior Alaska), presumably looking for food.

During these past months, hundreds of thousands of murres are thought to have died. Seabird biologists with the US Fish and Wildlife Service have said that this die-off is likely the largest ever recorded for Common Murres in Alaska, yet clear answers as to why this has happened are still lacking. Dead birds have been examined and almost all appeared to have starved to death. Several factors that may be contributing to the birds starving to death have been examined. One prominent factor may be related to a mass of unusually warm water (nicknamed "the Blob") that has settled into regions of the West Coast including the Gulf of Alaska and the southern Bering Sea. The Blob appears to be breaking down parts of the marine food web, including impacting the forage fish that murres eat. Warmer waters are also conducive to blooms of certain types of toxic algae (such as a "Red Tide," which may generate domoic acid, a toxin that can cause nervous system problems in marine mammals and people). These toxic algae are difficult to detect in birds but recent studies have shown that concurrent whale and seal die-offs in Alaska waters may be due to these toxins.

Record warm waters, warm air temperatures, and animal die-offs all speak to an uncertain future we all face in our rapidly changing world. Alaska is particularly hard-hit by these changes. We do not know how the Common Murre populations will respond to this massive die-off in the long run, but it does signal that we need, more than ever, to find ways to help bird populations respond to our changing climate. Audubon's role in identifying and protecting Alaska's critical bird habitat is one step. As a supporter of Audubon Alaska, you help protect the birds, wildlife, and habitat they depend on—and for that I am very grateful. ■

Mapping the Future (continued from page 1)

Erika Knight, our GIS/Data Analyst, handles tasks such as interviewing researchers, managing large amounts of GIS data, working with our cartographer on mapping, managing our scientific reference library, and helping write and edit the report. Erika's environmental consulting background included field research and GIS mapping, helping with her current task of looking at all the atlas' different datasets to see how they fit together.

As Audubon Alaska's GIS Biologist, Ben Sullender's role for the Arctic marine atlas is "providing geospatial, analytical, and quantitative assistance." Most recently, Ben delved into mapping the marine soundscape. Sound plays an integral role in the lives of marine mammals. As sea ice recedes, Arctic ship traffic is increasing in previously inaccessible areas. Based on ship traffic data, Ben is mapping out a gradient of how loud the ocean activities are and overlaying that with marine mammal critical habitat, revealing areas where sound levels are loud enough to cause behavioral disturbance in marine mammals. Ben will be presenting his soundscape work at the North American Congress on Conservation Biology in Madison, Wisconsin in July.

Representing the data on maps is a focus of this project, which requires advanced skills in "geovisualization." Once we have the data in hand, the cartographer focuses equally on the aesthetics of the maps and on

ensuring they accurately portray the data. For example, the polar bear data on the US and Canadian side of the study area consists of about 100,000 GPS points from collared bears. On the Russian side, the data is based on traditional ecological knowledge collected in anecdotal and interview formats. Bringing those two forms of data together on one integrated map takes careful consideration. Skye Cooley assisted with the first few months of the project, helping us make our maps more active to bring new stories out of our data. Ultimately, a contractor specializing in creative cartographic design will complete the atlas' maps. ■

**Looking Ahead**

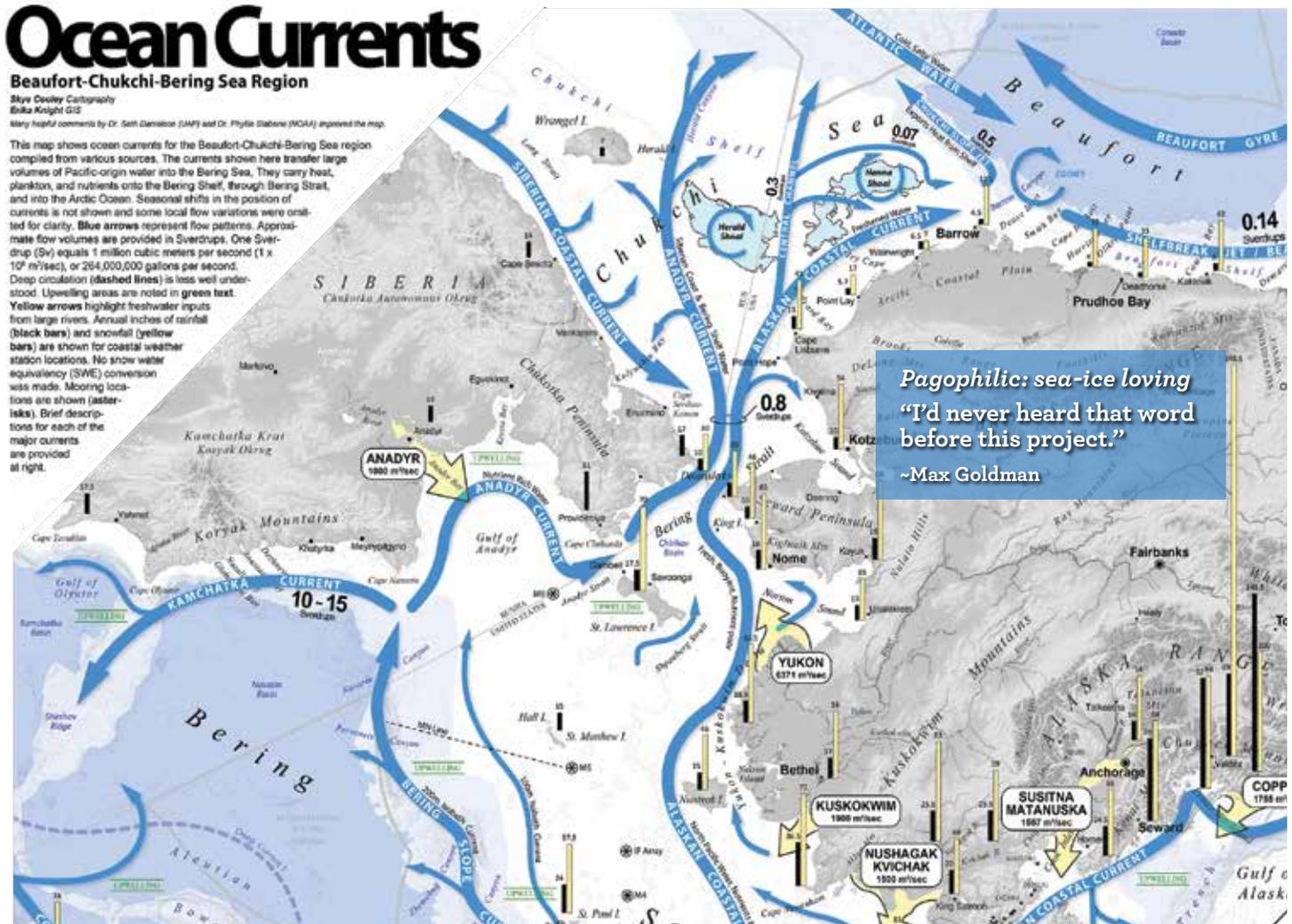
The growing need for the second *Ecological Atlas* is highlighted by events such as the Obama administration's release of the offshore oil and gas leasing plan for 2017-2022, allowing new Arctic Ocean drilling leases. Having Arctic information all in one document will make it easier to present conservation alternatives to protect the Arctic Ocean's future. We thank you for supporting Audubon Alaska—you help make possible the innovative science work that drives our conservation success.

# Ocean Currents

## Beaufort-Chukchi-Bering Sea Region

Skye Cooley Cartography  
Erika Knight GIS  
Many helpful comments by Dr. Seth Danabasog (JAMF) and Dr. Phyllis Stabeno (NOAA) improved the map.

This map shows ocean currents for the Beaufort-Chukchi-Bering Sea region compiled from various sources. The currents shown here transfer large volumes of Pacific-origin water into the Bering Sea. They carry heat, plankton, and nutrients onto the Bering Shelf, through Bering Strait, and into the Arctic Ocean. Seasonal shifts in the position of currents is not shown and some local flow variations were omitted for clarity. Blue arrows represent flow patterns. Approximate flow volumes are provided in Sverdrups. One Sverdrup (Sv) equals 1 million cubic meters per second (1 x 10<sup>6</sup> m<sup>3</sup>/sec), or 264 million gallons per second. Deep circulation (dashed lines) is less well understood. Upwelling areas are noted in green text. Yellow arrows highlight freshwater inputs from large rivers. Annual inches of rainfall (black bars) and snowfall (yellow bars) are shown for coastal weather station locations. No snow water equivalency (SWE) conversion was made. Mooring locations are shown (asterisks). Brief descriptions for each of the major currents are provided at right.



Detail of the Ocean Currents map.  
Map by Skye Cooley

# Get Outside with Audubon Chapters in Alaska

## Arctic Audubon

<http://arcticaudubon.org>

Join local birders as we hit the hotspots for birdwatching around the Fairbanks area during spring migration. The field trips are appropriate for birdwatchers of all levels.

Meet at 8:00am at the Creamer's Farmhouse Visitor Center parking lot (to the east of the Farmhouse.)

- April 15: Field trip to Delta Junction
- May 7: Waterfowl Identification
- May 14: Shorebird Identification
- May 21: Songbird Identification (birding by ear) ■

## Anchorage Audubon Society

[www.anchorageaudubon.org](http://www.anchorageaudubon.org)

- April 16 & 17: *The Gunsight Mountain HawkWatch Weekend*. Mile 118.8 on the Glenn Highway. April 16, 10:30am—A short raptor identification talk. April 17, the Mat-Su Birders will host their annual Hawk Watch Potluck BBQ at the same location.
- June 2016: *Dutch Harbor Trip*. Several Anchorage Audubon members are organizing a guided birding trip on the *Tustumena* ferry from Homer to Dutch in June. We are also hoping to charter a boat in Dutch to better our chances of seeing the Whiskered Auklet. If you are interested in this possible adventure, please contact Lynn Barber ([dalybar@aol.com](mailto:dalybar@aol.com)). ■

## Juneau Audubon Society

[www.juneau-audubon-society.org](http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org)

Bird walks begin on April 16! The April Raven newsletter will have the places, times, and leaders for each event from April 16 through mid-June. Come join us and explore our wonderful birding opportunities in Juneau. (Be sure to confirm hike locations in the Raven newsletter in case of changes.)

- April 16: Fish Creek
- April 23: Auke Recreation Area/Point Louisa
- April 30: Berners Bay boat cruise, one trip
- May 7: Berners Bay boat cruise, five boats (one trip per boat)
- May 21: Brotherhood Bridge
- May 28: Airport Dike Trail
- June 4: Dredge Lakes or Treadwell trails
- June 11: Eagle Beach
- June 18: Dredge Lakes or Treadwell trails
- June 25: Saturday Wild Minus Tide Walk ■

## Kodiak Audubon

Visit Kodiak Audubon on Facebook

Kodiak Audubon will continue to offer hiking this summer on Saturdays and Sundays, meeting at 9:30am at the Ferry Dock. The schedule is usually available by the end of April on Facebook and our website. ■

**Bird walks and field trips with local chapters offer a great opportunity to get outside and mingle with other birders.**

*Photograph by Nathan Walker*

## Leave a Legacy and Make a Difference



Ken and his daughter on Admiralty Island, enjoying some of the Alaska Wilderness that Audubon has worked hard to preserve. *Photograph by Terry Debruyne, US Fish and Wildlife Service*

Leaving a gift to protect birds and their habitats is easier than most people think, and we can help make it even easier. It is especially quick and simple to name Audubon Alaska as a beneficiary of a retirement account, life insurance policy, or other financial account. These gifts:

- Cost you nothing now,
- Enable you to change your beneficiaries at any time, for any reason, and
- Require no minimum contribution.

How easy is it really? Ken Leghorn says "Changing my IRA beneficiary form to list Audubon Alaska as the recipient took me ten minutes, was free, and now I'm delighted to have helped sustain Audubon Alaska's exciting work. I didn't have to update my will and I feel good knowing the gift will someday go directly to Audubon Alaska, without going through probate or my estate."

Ken wants part of the legacy he leaves to his family to be the gift of a wild Alaska, through a planned gift to Audubon Alaska.

For more information, request our free guide today by contacting Michelle LeBeau at (907) 276-7034 or [mlebeau@audubon.org](mailto:mlebeau@audubon.org). You may also download our guides and other legacy information at [www.audubon.planyourlegacy.org](http://www.audubon.planyourlegacy.org). ■



## Arctic Refuge Birds in Your Neighborhood Flyway

The coastal plain is the heart of the Arctic Refuge, hosting nearly 125 bird species; birds from all four North American flyways nest here. There are currently two bills in Congress that would permanently protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's coastal plain. Now is the best opportunity to push your members of Congress to pass those bills.

Starting in April, Audubon Alaska will focus on the migration of five "spokesbirds" as they move across the country to gather in the Arctic Refuge's rich nesting grounds: Tundra Swans, Smith's Longspurs, American Golden-Plovers, Pacific Brant, and Northern Pintails. You'll find fun facts and migration maps about each species at [www.AudubonAlaska.org](http://www.AudubonAlaska.org). We'll also have sample newsletter articles and letters-to-the-editor for your state. Which birds show up in your flyway?

### What You Can Do

Showing Congress there is strong support for permanent protection of the Arctic Refuge now is crucial. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper, have a letter writing party with your Audubon chapter, or send a letter or email to your members of Congress. Here are some key points:

- The Arctic Refuge is important to and belongs to all Americans.
- If you've seen any of the "spokesbirds" in your state, share your story!
- The Refuge is crucial to populations of birds that you see and value in your state.
- Designating the Refuge as Wilderness will protect plovers and a host of other important wildlife species from oil and gas development. ■



**Tundra Swans migrate from the Arctic Refuge to the East Coast.**  
*Photograph by Dave Shaw*

## Beaufort Sea Nearshore Important Bird Area

The Beaufort Sea Nearshore Important Bird Area (IBA) occupies more than 1 million acres of pelagic open water habitat. A series of long, thin barrier islands and spits line the Beaufort Sea coast from the Colville River to Demarcation Bay. Between the islands and the coast, shallow lagoons and bays act as a large estuary, fed by many sizable rivers which drain into the sea.

From November to July, this area is covered with landfast ice. Unable to flow freely into the sea, fresh water from the Meade, Ikpikpuk, Colville, and Canning Rivers flows over the top of the ice. A system of open leads (open water amidst the sea ice) occurs regularly along the edge where the stable landfast ice and the drifting pack ice meet.

The Beaufort Sea Nearshore is an IBA for Glaucous Gull and Long-tailed Duck. It contains an estimated 19,990 Glaucous Gulls and more than 293,000 Long-tailed Ducks during breeding season.

The barrier islands are a refuge for nesting and foraging birds. Birds heading to Alaska's North Slope migrate and forage in these waters in early summer, before moving inland to their nesting grounds, as well as after the breeding season. This is a marine concentration area for Long-tailed Ducks, Red-throated Loons, Spectacled Eiders, King Eiders,

and Long-tailed Ducks nest in high concentrations just inland of this section of the Beaufort Sea coast. Arctic Terns, Glaucous Gulls, and Snowy Owls nest here, and Common Eiders nest in colonies of up to 500 birds throughout this area.

From the Canning River east to the Canadian border, the barrier islands and lagoons fall within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and protected for Wilderness, wildlife, recreation, subsistence, upholding international treaties, and water quality. The lagoon/barrier island system east of the Aichilik River and Demarcation Bay is also designated Wilderness. Although oil and gas drilling is a continual threat for the Arctic Refuge's contested coastal plain, oil and gas leasing, exploration, and production are currently prohibited there by law. Oil and gas seismic exploration, exploratory drilling, production wells, production facilities, pipelines and development, and oil spills—including spills from activities in adjacent State of Alaska and federal Beaufort Sea Outer Continental Shelf Lease Program Area—could also negatively affect this IBA.

Audubon Alaska's work to protect the Arctic Refuge coastal plain and prevent offshore drilling in the Beaufort Sea help to keep this thriving area alive with birds. ■

Long-tailed Ducks rely on the coastal marine waters of the Beaufort Sea Nearshore IBA.

*Photograph by Dave Shaw*



# People of Audubon

## BOARD



Audubon Alaska welcomes new board member **Jerome McCluskey** back to our neck of the woods. He visited with us previously when his wife Alexis Maybank served on the Audubon Alaska board (she is now on the National Audubon board). Jerome is a partner in the New York office of the law firm Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy. He serves on a number of boards for a variety of organizations, including the Board of Trustees of the Boys Club of New York and the Stanford Law School Board of Visitors. Jerome was selected as a

David Rockefeller Fellow for the Class of 2015-2016 by the Partnership for New York City—each Fellow must hold a key leadership position at a New York City-based company, have a demonstrated interest in civic activities, and be nominated by their company's CEO. Jerome is also a former term member of the Council on Foreign Relations. He and Alexis currently live in New York. ■



Audubon Alaska welcomes new board member **Evie Witten**. Evie has enjoyed several decades in conservation science and leadership in Alaska and Canada, most recently serving as Deputy Director for Canada for The Nature Conservancy, and previously as Director of World Wildlife Fund's Alaska Field Office. She was a founding member and first Executive Director of Great Land Trust. Her conservation experience and interests run strongly to establishing and growing innovative and collaborative approaches to resource conflicts,

and on developing community-based conservation practices that address landscapes as a social, economic, and environmental whole. Evie is currently owner of Evie's Brinery, a start-up business naturally fermenting Alaska Grown vegetables into sauerkrauts and kimchis. She lives in Anchorage where she enjoys all sorts of skiing and boating with her husband, Rand Hagenstein, and their 7-year-old daughter Neve. ■

## STAFF



Audubon Alaska thanks **Jim Adams** for his hard work as our Policy Director. Jim took a position as the Alaska Regional Director for the National Parks Conservation Association in December. Jim started at Audubon in May 2013, working the legislative and agency angles on issues such as the Arctic Ocean, Arctic Refuge, NPRA, Tongass, and Bering Sea shipping. Jim graduated from Williams College in 1990 and earned a law degree and master's in philosophy from Duke University in 1993. He first came to Alaska in 1993

as a one-year legal intern for the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and, like many Alaskans, chose to stay. He eventually became director of NWF's Pacific region, before returning to policy work at Audubon Alaska. Jim lives in Anchorage with his wife, daughter, and son, and spends as much time as he can in the mountains running, skiing, and camping. Thanks Jim, we'll miss you breaking into song during staff meetings. ■



Audubon Alaska welcomes **Erika Knight** as a GIS/Data Analyst working on the second edition of the *Ecological Atlas of the Chukchi, Beaufort, and Bering Seas*. She joined our staff in November 2015. Originally from New Hampshire, Erika holds a BA in Geology from Cornell University and an MS in Environmental and Forest Sciences from University of Washington, where her MS research focused on soil chemistry and nutrient cycling in Pacific Northwest forests. She has previously worked as an environmental consultant in Washington and Alaska and as an outdoor educator in New York. Erika and her husband John moved to Alaska in 2013. They enjoy exploring and photographing Alaska's mountains and coastline on skis, hiking boots, or in kayaks. ■



Audubon Alaska welcomes **Susan Culliney** as our new Policy Associate. Susan grew up in Hawaii, where she developed a love for the native birds that inhabited the misty upland rainforests. After gaining a BA from Bowdoin College, Susan spent several memorable years as a field biologist: trapping migratory raptors and hooting for owls. She earned an MS in conservation biology from Colorado State University, studying the seed dispersal abilities of the endangered Hawaiian Crow, then obtained a JD from Lewis and Clark

Law School, with a focus in environmental law. Susan arrived in Alaska expecting to spend only a year working for a judge in Anchorage, but was quickly captivated by the state's spectacular wildlife and complex environmental challenges. She now feels like a Kolea, or Pacific Golden-Plover: at home snowshoeing and trekking in Alaska, but also making trips back to Hawaii to spend quality time with family and the waves at Waimanalo Beach. Susan can be found exploring local trails on skis or ice-cleats in the winter, and hiking near bodies of water in the summer. ■



Audubon Alaska also welcomes **Max Goldman** as the Arctic Marine Ecologist for the second edition of *Ecological Atlas of the Chukchi, Beaufort, and Bering Seas*. Max researches, organizes, and interprets data on topics ranging from sea ice dynamics to Red-throated Loons. This is his first opportunity in Alaska. Max grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Katy, Texas. He was an AmeriCorps volunteer in Northern California for the Marin Conservation Corps, working at the Audubon Canyon Ranch among Great Blue Herons and

Great Egrets. After earning a Bachelor's degree from Prescott College in Field Biology, emphasizing Ornithology, Max traveled extensively collecting data on (among other things) baboons in South Africa, wildfire in Colorado, and an oil spill on the Gulf Coast. Max completed Duke University's Nonprofit Management certification program. When not at Audubon, Max can be found in the kitchen or outside with his wife, Michelle, and their son, Bennett. ■

## Answer to WatchList Quiz

Rusty Blackbird  
(female)

*Euphagus carolinus*



Rusty Blackbirds are a Red List WatchList species because of a steep decline from an estimated 13 million birds in 1965 to approximately 2 million today. "Rusties" winter in the eastern half of the US, and nest across boreal North America. In the non-breeding season, both sexes have rusty edges on their feathers. By the breeding season, the edges wear off, leaving males a glossy, solid black and females a silvery or charcoal gray. Both sexes have pale yellow eyes. Photograph by Dave Shaw

## Birding Belize with Audubon Alaska in February 2017

In addition to its rich Maya history and Caribbean-influenced culture, the small country of Belize offers birders a huge diversity of migrant and resident species in lush and varied ecosystems. Join Audubon Alaska February 19–28 and explore habitats that include wetlands, pine forest, tropical moist forest, and a mangrove island on this unforgettable adventure. Go birding at Crooked Tree Sanctuary, a vital habitat for migratory and resident wetland species; hike through the towering jungle of Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, also known as Jaguar Preserve; learn about endemic butterflies; and visit Mayan ruins at Lamanai. Support sustainable, bird-based tourism and hemispheric conservation in Belize, as well as Audubon Alaska's work in the Great Land. ■

For more information visit <http://holbrook.travel/audubonalaskabz>.



Ornate Hawk-Eagle in Belize.  
Photograph by Juan Zamora

## Use Your Binoculars to Help Birds

Audubon Alaska offers opportunities for you to help birds by going out birding! We have training materials available, so whether you're an advanced birder looking to brush off the winter cobwebs or a beginner trying to sharpen your birding skills, we welcome your participation.

**Birds 'n' Bogs**—Throughout May. In Anchorage and the Mat-su Valley. Many bird species that depend on boreal bogs, such as Lesser Yellowlegs and Solitary Sandpipers, are declining. This project will help us monitor these species in the region. Volunteers conduct a series of three to four surveys to search for target species in assigned bogs.

**Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz**—April 9–May 31. Statewide (also Lower 48). Rusty Blackbirds, although numerous, are declining alarmingly. The causes of decline aren't well understood, so researchers are scrambling to find out more. Volunteers simply enter their bird sightings in the eBird online database—whether they do or do not see a Rusty Blackbird. ■

For more information, visit [www.AudubonAlaska.org](http://www.AudubonAlaska.org) or contact Beth Peluso at 907-276-7034 or [bpeluso@audubon.org](mailto:bpeluso@audubon.org).



Birding for conservation.  
Photograph by Beth Peluso

## Birdathon is Flying Your Way

May is when the biggest wave of migrating birds arrives in Alaska. Which means it's time for the Audubon Alaska Birdathon competition!

What is the Birdathon? Audubon Alaska staff form teams, collect pledges for donations, and go birding. The goal is to count as many species as possible in a 24-hour period, raise money to protect Alaska's amazing birds, and earn bragging rights for the year. The second place Rubber Chicken Award (displayed prominently in the team leader's office for the year) is motivation to keep birding details top secret in hopes of a Birdathon win.

Stay tuned for how you can support a Birdathon team or make a donation now at [www.AudubonAlaska.org](http://www.AudubonAlaska.org). ■



The dreaded rubber chicken. Photograph by Michelle LeBeau



*Printed on recycled paper*

## 2016 Alaska Bird Festivals See [www.AudubonAlaska.org](http://www.AudubonAlaska.org) for details.

### **Ketchikan Hummingbird Festival**

Month of April

### **Gunsight Mountain Hawkwatch Weekend**

Mile 118.8 Glenn Highway; April 16 & 17

### **Stikine River Birding Festival**

Wrangell; April 28–May 1

### **International Migratory Bird Day**

- Seward Migration Celebration, April 22–24
- Spring Migration Celebration, Fairbanks, Creamer's Field; April 30
- Juneau Community Gardens; May 14, 8:00–10:00am
- Anchorage, Alaska Zoo; May 22, 11:00am–5:00pm
- Kodiak Refuge Visitor Center; May (TBA)

### **Audubon Alaska Summer Bird Walks**

Anchorage, Westchester Lagoon; Wednesdays  
6:30pm–8:30pm

### **Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival**

Cordova; May 5–8

### **Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival**

Homer; May 12–15

### **Kenai River Birding Festival**

Soldotna, Kenai, Seward; May 19–22

### **Upper Tanana Migratory Bird Festival**

Tok, Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge; TBA

### **Yakutat Tern Festival**

Yakutat; June 2–5

### **Potter Marsh Discovery Day**

Anchorage, Potter Marsh board walk; June 4,  
11:00am–4:00pm

### **Gone with the Wing Festival**

Anchorage, Bird Treatment & Learning Center;  
TBA (usually August)

### **Bike and Bird Day**

Anchorage, starts at Westchester Lagoon;  
TBA (usually first weekend of August)

### **Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival**

Fairbanks, Creamer's Field; August 26–28

### **Alaska Bald Eagle Festival**

Haines; November 14–20 ■

## WatchList Quiz Bird

Can you identify  
this species from  
the WatchList?

Answer on page 6.

