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Inspiration from Jimmy Carter

By David Krause, Vice President-Alaska Program

As I write this note, President Jimmy Carter lies in state at the U.S. Capitol. Thousands of people have already passed through the rotunda to pay their respects and reflect on his remarkably impactful life.

As a young college student studying biology and development sociology, I counted Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter among my heroes. In addition to being avid anglers and birders, the Carters were busy bettering the world through a global portfolio of peace and public health initiatives. It wasn't until after graduating and moving to Alaska, however, that I came to understand their full and lasting impact on the state's lands, waters, and people.



Photo: Courtesy Debbie S. Miller

Debbie Miller of Alaska Wilderness League visits with the Carters on the tundra in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in 1990.

Today, we can thank President Carter for Alaska's rich network of wildlife refuges, parks and preserves, Wilderness areas, and wild and scenic rivers. In 1980, after considerable negotiation, President Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) into law. This legislation protected over 100 million acres of Alaska and helped guarantee subsistence rights for rural residents. It was an accomplishment that he said was one of the most significant and gratifying achievements of his public life. We all continue to benefit from it.

In his book *An Outdoor Journal: Adventures and Reflections*, President Carter recounts two fly fishing trips in Alaska. The stories include memorable experiences with his grandson, yodeling loons, and huge rainbow trout. But it was the wildness during a trip to western Alaska that really seemed to stick with him. Here he wrote:

The abundant wildlife provided almost constant excitement during the trip. Bear, caribou, otter, moose, and eagles were plentiful, and once, while I was fishing under an overhanging bluff, a light-gray wolf came across the tundra, lay down on the cliff above me to watch for a while, and then quietly loped away.

Every single day our work in Alaska is driven by President Carter's vision, political courage, and determination to protect some of the nation's greatest ecological and cultural treasures. Please join us in the continued effort to ensure that wild Alaska, and the millions of birds it supports, is safeguarded forever. ■



Emperor Goose

Anser canagicus

This tidewater goose of the Bering Sea region ordinarily migrates from the Alaskan and Siberian tundra to the Aleutian chain. In spring and fall, flocks may stage in Alaska Peninsula lagoons (like Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, which supports more than half the world population of Emperor Geese) before moving on to breeding areas on Alaska's west coast (like Safety Sound, see Page 6). A co-managed species with Indigenous Peoples, the Emperor Goose is of conservation concern. As a coastal breeder in the far north, it's likely vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Photo: Tim Bowman

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ALASKA

For more than 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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Land Acknowledgment

Audubon Alaska recognizes that we work throughout the ancestral territory of the Indigenous Peoples of Alaska. Our office is located within Dena'ina ekena, the traditional land of the Dena'ina Athabascan, but our work spans the entire state of Alaska. We owe deep gratitude to the Indigenous Peoples of Alaska for their continued care and stewardship of the land on which we work.



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People of Audubon

The Audubon Alaska advisory board has a few new faces.

Beth Kerttula



Photo: Courtesy of Beth Kerttula

After practicing as a lawyer for almost 20 years, when Beth first became a state legislator, it felt like going home. That is because she had grown up in the halls of the capitol. Her parents, Jay and Joyce, were dedicated public servants—Jay serving in the legislature for 34 years and Joyce working alongside him managing his office as an unpaid volunteer. The Kerttulas were also dairy farmers and off session they lived on their farm near Palmer, where Jay's family had been part of the 1935 Colony. Beth still loves animals and gardening and maintains her family's deep respect for the people and land of Alaska.

Beth served 15 years in the Alaska State House of Representatives; seven as Minority Leader. She left to be a Fellow at Stanford University and became Director of the National Ocean Council in the Executive Office of President Obama in Washington, D.C., where she worked with Tribes, states, and federal agencies to implement the National Ocean Plan. Beth returned home in 2016 and has since focused on family, environmental work, and campaigning for other people. Beth and her husband Jim Powell live on the coast in Juneau with their exceptionally spoiled dog, Blue. ■

Tom Paragi

Tom hails from upstate New York and came to Alaska in 1985 to finish an undergraduate degree in wildlife management, spending summers working for the Chugach National Forest and the University of Alaska. After obtaining a master's degree in wildlife management in Maine, he returned to Alaska in 1990 and worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on several national wildlife refuges. In 1999 he was hired by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to conduct research on wildlife habitat management in boreal forest, and over time he undertook applied research on birds and mammals.



Photo: Courtesy of Tom Paragi

Through these work experiences and recreational travel in Alaska, Tom developed an appreciation of the diverse ecosystems, anthropogenic effects, and human values associated with nature. He learned to identify adaptive challenges as a fellow at the National Conservation Leadership Institute and helped colleagues undertake constructive engagement on controversial issues. Recently retired from ADF&G, he continues to live outside of Fairbanks and to advocate and volunteer for Alaska State Parks. ■



Photo: Tim Bowman

In other Audubon Alaska news, we're moving offices! Our new address effective as of May 1, 2025 will be 750 West Second Avenue, Suite 100, in downtown Anchorage. More details to come.

Introducing the Utqiagvik Alaska Birding Trail

In collaboration with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Ilisagvik College, Iñupiat Heritage Center, North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management, UIC Science, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Tuzzy Consortium Library, Audubon Alaska is happy to present the Utqiagvik Alaska Birding Trail.

This birding trail (a guide to birding hotspots within a specific geographic region) offers site recommendations and descriptions, driving directions, special travel notes, and possible bird species sightings for bird tourists and Utqiagvik residents. The trail details 10 sites throughout Utqiagvik, including the Stevenson Street Beachfront, Freshwater Lake at the end of Imaiqsaun Road, South Salt Lagoon, and more. You can view the virtual brochure at bit.ly/utq-birding-trail.

Utqiagvik is the economic, transportation, and administrative center of the North Slope Borough. Located on the Chukchi Sea coast, this is the northernmost community in the United States. It is traditionally known as Ukpeagvik, or “place where Snowy Owls are hunted.” Utqiagvik was incorporated as a first-class city in 1958 and is the ancestral and present-day lands of the Iñupiat people.

The Utqiagvik Alaska Birding Trail was created as a community asset for economic development and educational purposes. This trail follows the 2020 launch of the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail, Alaska’s first digital birding trail. Both were designed to make travel planning and visiting Alaska accessible to everyone from seasoned local birders to bird-curious tourists, foster sustainable economic development built around the bioregion, and grow Alaska’s economy through bird tourism. A 2023-released survey from USFWS found that 148.3 million U.S. residents (57% of the U.S. population 16 years old or older) participated in wildlife-watching activities. Of all the wildlife in the United States, birds were the greatest focus. And a 2022-released study found that in 2016, “nearly 300,000 birdwatchers visited Alaska and spent \$378 million supporting approximately 4,000 jobs.”

Many thanks go to Indigenous Knowledge Liaison Robin Mongoyak, Iñupiat language resources like Iñupiatun Uqaluit Taniktun Sivuniġit and the official website of the North Slope Borough, Utqiagvik Migratory Bird Festival organizers Lindsay Hermanns and Aaron Yappert, and artist Eric Cline of TerraGraphica.

Audubon Alaska staff will be at the 2025 Utqiagvik Migratory Bird Festival with more information and materials on the Utqiagvik Alaska Birding Trail. We hope to see you there! ■



■ King Eider in Utqiagvik, Alaska.

Alaska's 2025 Bird Festivals

Each year, Alaska—home to the world's largest concentration of shorebirds, breeding hotspots for hundreds of migratory species, and a global destination for birders—host bird-themed festivals. No pressure, right?

Luckily bird-focused events here easily rise to the occasion thanks to dedicated organizers, schedules packed with only-in-Alaska experiences, cultural programming, community participation, and above all (literally): birds. But in addition to being fun and educational, bird festivals also honor Alaska Native culture and art, highlight conservation issues, and benefit tourism and local economies (as we got into on Page 3).

Here's your breakdown of where some of our favorite bird festivals take place throughout the state, throughout the year.

Alaska Hummingbird Festival

When: April 4 to 26, 2025

Where: Ketchikan

Draw: Return of Rufous Hummingbirds to Tongass National Forest

Website: fs.usda.gov/goto/tongass/seadc

This free, month-long annual festival offers guided bird hikes, a juried art show, and activities for children at the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center.

Whale and Bird Fest

When: TBD (usually early April)

Where: Craig, Alaska

Draw: Whales and spring migratory bird species

Website: discoverpowisland.com

This festival celebrates the whale population and spring migratory bird species across Prince of Wales Island with bird walks, whale tours, bird art workshops, and social events.

Gunsight Mountain Hawkwatch Weekend

When: April 19 and 20, 2025

Where: Mile 118.8 on Glenn Highway

Draw: Migrating raptors (Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrels)

Website: anchorageaudubon.org/annual-events-1

Celebrate spring's migrating raptors at Gunsight Mountain with this annual counting event organized by the Anchorage Audubon Society.

Stikine River Birding Festival

When: April 23 to 27, 2025

Where: Wrangell

Draw: The largest springtime concentration in North America of Bald Eagles, followed by Sandhill Cranes, and Snow Geese

Website: travelwrangell.com/birding-festival

This festival celebrates spring migration in Southeast Alaska with bird feeder building, art and photo contests, guest speaker lectures, and tours of the Stikine River flats.



Spring Migration Celebration

When: April 26, 2025

Where: Fairbanks

Draw: Viewing opportunities for Trumpeter Swans, White-fronted Geese, and various duck species

Website: friendsofcreamersfield.org/spring-migration-celebration

Celebrate spring migrants at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. Activities include birdwatching and wildlife viewing, guided nature walks, falconry demonstrations, and kids' crafts.

Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival

When: May 1 to 4, 2025

Where: Cordova

Draw: As many as 5 million shorebirds during spring migration

Website: coppershorebird.com

View hundreds of thousands of shorebirds then catch activities like art workshops, raffles, nature presentations, tours, bird trivia, and more.

Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival

When: May 7 to 11, 2025

Where: Homer

Draw: Miles of shoreline and intertidal habitat for migrating birds

Website: kachemakshorebird.org

This festival offers field trips, workshops, presentations by expert speakers and naturalists, and tours by boat, bus, and kayak.

Yakutat Tern Festival

When: May 29 to June 1, 2025

Where: Yakutat

Draw: One of the largest and southernmost known nesting colonies of Aleutian Terns

Website: yakutatternfestival.org

Celebrate the natural and cultural resources of Yakutat with field trips, seminars, kids' activities, keynote speakers, evening banquets, bird-banding demonstrations, and more.

Utqiagvik Migratory Bird Festival

When: June 12 to 15, 2025

Where: Utqiagvik

Draw: Migratory birds in full breeding plumage on the Arctic tundra

Website: facebook.com/utqbirdfest

The festival offers activities like educational activities for kids, bird tours, and speakers sharing their knowledge on shorebird and avian science and cultural importance.

Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival

When: August 18 to 24, 2025

Where: Fairbanks

Draw: An abundance of Sandhill Cranes during fall migration

Website: friendsofcreamersfield.org/tanana-valley-sandhill-crane-festival

Events include nature walks, crafts, a crane calling contest, art workshops, a driving tour of Fairbanks birding hotspots, a live birds of prey program, and bird research talks.

Alaska Bald Eagle Festival

When: TBD (usually November)

Where: Haines

Draw: One of the largest gatherings of Bald Eagles in the world

Website: baldeagles.org/events

Attendees are transported to the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve to witness the annual Gathering of the Eagles. Events include photography workshops and wildlife presentations.

We hope to see you at many of these annual and educational events across Alaska. For more details, visit ak.audubon.org/birds/bird-festivals-alaska. ■



Safety Sound Is Again Under Threat From a Nevada-Based Mining Operation

Last year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reversed a 2022 decision on a controversial mining project led by Nevada-based IPOP, LLC. The dredging permit was awarded after IPOP adjusted its plan to reduce its environmental impact from 192.5 acres in Bonanza Channel—which feeds into the Safety Sound Important Bird Area (IBA) about 25 miles east of Nome—to 159.4 acres.

Safety Sound is an ecologically unique habitat of great importance to birds and people. Numerous species of seabirds, shorebirds, and migratory waterfowl utilize the IBA, including species listed as declining on Audubon Alaska's Watchlist and others formally listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Safety Sound, culturally irreplaceable to Alaska Native Peoples and subsistence users, yields “Eskimo potatoes, seal, moose, bear, fish, berries, Tundra tea, birds, eggs,” says Deilah Johnson, Village of Soloman's Treasurer and Tribal Resources Director. “There really isn't anything that has not been a part of the traditional lifestyle of the people that have been living there for decades and decades.”

The area is formally classified as an estuarine and marine wetland tidal habitat that supports a variety of submerged aquatic vegetation types, including eelgrass. It's also an essential fish habitat. “There's no doubt that salmon and grayling and other important freshwater species migrate up and down that channel,” says Charlie Lean, Norton Sound

Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) fisheries consultant and retired Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) fisheries biologist.

Safety Sound also draws worldwide birders and photographers, creating meaningful economic activity. “The unique draw of Nome is the ability to see northern North American species seldom seen elsewhere,” says Kate Persons, retired ADF&G wildlife biologist. “Of all the places on the Nome road system, Safety Sound—especially Bonanza Channel—are the most rewarding for birders.”

The project has garnered concern from Kawerak (a nonprofit that serves some 20 Iñupiaq and Yup'ik Tribes), Village of Solomon, NSEDC, Bering Straits Native Corporation, City of Nome's Common Council, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Two public comment periods occurred in 2024, though they were ill-advised and short-lasting according to multiple attendees of the single information session held in August 2024. IPOP obtained a discharge permit from the Department of Environmental Conservation in October 2024. It still needs a permit from the Department of Natural Resources before beginning operations.

Audubon Alaska will continue to report on and generate opportunities for advocacy for Safety Sound in 2025. For now, follow facebook.com/StopIPOP. ■

■ A Semipalmated Sandpiper chick along Council Road by the Bonanza Channel.

Alaska's Audubon Chapters

Alaska hosts five National Audubon Society chapters where Audubon members and their friends and family can enjoy and protect local birds and nature.



■ Potter Marsh in Anchorage.

Photo: John Schoen

Anchorage Audubon Society anchorageaudubon.org

After 50 years, Anchorage Audubon still prioritizes keeping its friends warm and verdant. In late 2024, Anchorage Audubon partnered with the Great Land Trust to create a 300-acre park to protect the watershed flowing into the southern end of Potter Marsh—one of Anchorage's richest avian habitats. Anchorage Audubon donated \$20,000 to the fund in memory of former board members Jean Tam and Scott Christy. This donation was a matching grant which doubled the contributions of individual donors to the project. The full \$20,000 from individuals has not been realized, so any philanthropic readers can still have their donations doubled if they contribute to the fund directly through Great Land Trust at greatland-trust.org (be sure to write "Potter Marsh Watershed Park" in the dedication field if you choose to contribute). ■

Arctic Audubon Society arcticaudubon.org

In 2025, Arctic Audubon will share its enjoyment of migratory birds living in subarctic and arctic habitats with two festivals: the Spring Migration Celebration and Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival (details on Pages 4 and 5). As the closest chapter to the Arctic

National Wildlife Refuge, we long ago "adopted" the area, and with the new Trump administration, work shifts again to full-out defense of the Arctic Refuge from oil and gas activity. We will continue to involve our members and community to best protect this heart of animal activity where accelerating climate change already alters the landscape. Our conservation work also includes a management plan for our 340-acre Audubon Riedel Nature Reserve and helping to defend the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge from a resurgent threat of oil and gas drilling. Finally, while the Biden administration thankfully rejected the Ambler Road south of the Brooks Range, diligence will be required into the future. ■

Juneau Audubon Society juneau-audubon-society.org

JAS had a successful 2024 of birding, educating, and supporting conservation efforts. Monthly membership meetings and programs (October to April) offered the community opportunities to learn about our efforts and gain knowledge about natural history and bird-related topics. Spring and summer field trips (April to July) gathered people of all backgrounds and birding abilities to focus on birds and their habitats. Outreach events at the university and

community garden served to spread the news of our mission and avian concerns. Conservation efforts included best practices for feeding, window deterrents, wetlands protection, and interpretative signage. After a year-long process with announcements, newsletter articles, and surveys, the JAS board has voted to drop "Audubon" for a more inclusive and descriptive name to brand the Southeast chapter. We remain diligent in our mission and look forward to 2025. ■

Kodiak Audubon Society kodiakaudubon.blogspot.com

The Kodiak Audubon Society is a volunteer, nonprofit organization located on Kodiak offering bird-watching field trips, monthly meetings, educational programs, newsletters, and special events to highlight birds, wildlife, and conservation issues on Kodiak Island. ■

Prince William Sound Audubon Society coppershorebird.com

The Prince William Sound Audubon Society is a volunteer, nonprofit organization located in Cordova that provides monthly educational programs about birds and nature. They are involved with the annual Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival and Christmas Bird Count. ■



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2025 Bird of the Year Candidates

It's that time again! Voting is open till April 1, 2025 for Bird of the Year and we're highlighting three special candidates: Aleutian Tern, Lesser Yellowlegs, and Tundra Swan. Cast your vote and graphic artist Eric Cline will illustrate the winner. See more information at ak.audubon.org/birds/bird-of-the-year. Meet your candidates!

Aleutian Tern



Photo: Patty McGann

Hello, I'm the Aleutian Tern—sleek, silver, and stylish in flight! While the Arctic Tern may claim the longest migration, I am willing to go to even greater lengths to protect Alaska's coastal habitats. Vote for me, and let's keep Alaska's shores wild and fabulous! ■

Lesser Yellowlegs



Photo: Nick Shearman/Audubon Photography Awards

Hi, I'm the Lesser Yellowlegs—small bird, big dreams! With my dazzling yellow legs (I don't skip leg day) I represent the lengths Alaska's birds are willing to fly (and walk) for good food and breeding grounds. But rising threats to wetlands could leave birds like me without a home. Vote for me, and together, we'll protect our habitats one marsh at a time! ■

Tundra Swan



Photo: Mark Boyd/Audubon Photography Awards

Greetings, voters! I am the Tundra Swan, known for the melodic whistle of my wings as I grace Alaska's skies. But even I cannot ignore the threats to our wetlands from shifting federal priorities. Vote for me and together we'll protect these vital habitats and keep Alaska's natural symphony alive! ■