



Audubon ALASKA News

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Beaufort Coastal Corridor Report

In a new report, Audubon Alaska takes a closer look at the Beaufort Coastal Corridor. This portion of Alaska's North Slope and Arctic Ocean provides important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Recently, the region has been experiencing increasing impacts from both climate change and oil and gas development. As a result, it is essential to analyze the types of changes taking place in order to determine whether ecologically important areas will be resilient to or threatened by what is happening. This report, which can be found on Audubon Alaska's website, describes the causes of ecological change in the region, as well as identifies areas that support recurring high concentrations of wildlife.



Caribou. Photograph by Bob Wick / BLM

Through previous work in the region, Audubon Alaska has identified ecologically important areas encompassing submarine shelf breaks, nearshore lagoons, gravel barrier islands, exposed coastlines, wetlands, upland tundra, and riparian habitats. Evidence presented in this new report indicates that most of these areas will continue to remain important, even with changing climates. Near Teshekpuk Lake, coastal erosion and saltwater inundation will likely make the area even more valuable for waterbirds. However, we may see a decrease in the number of caribou in the area as a result of changes in vegetation and oil-development-related barriers to migration. Throughout all of this analysis, scientific uncertainty plays a large role. Any management strategy needs to allow wildlife the ability to adjust to ecological changes. The Beaufort Coastal Corridor report concludes that spatial protection of these important areas is likely an effective strategy for the conservation of birds and other wildlife that make the Arctic such a vibrant ecosystem. ■



Teshekpuk Lake Wetlands. Photograph by Milo Burcham



Birds Can't Vote, but YOU Can.

Join bird lovers from Alaska and across the country by pledging to "Vote for the Birds" this fall. The decision makers who we elect will have an important influence on the ways laws are written and enacted at every level of government. We know how much you care for birds. The best way to protect them and the places they need is to make sure that you vote on November 6.

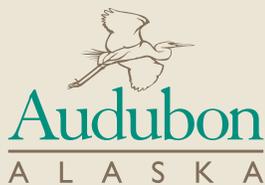
Photograph on masthead by Spencer Craig

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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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DIRECTOR'S VIEWPOINT

Being Resilient in Difficult Times

By Michelle LeBeau

As someone who has spent most of her career working in the environmental field, I find the prospect of losing bed-rock environmental laws like Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Endangered Species Act, daunting at best. There is no doubt it has become more difficult to safeguard the environment birds and people need to thrive. From the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Bristol Bay, the stakes are high. Once habitat is lost, it won't come back. Not in our lifetimes.



■ Sandhill Cranes. Photograph by Larry Lynch

These are turbulent times we're in, and it is exhausting. As people who care about being good stewards of our world, we have our work cut out for us. Conservation wins have never come easy, and the unraveling is hard to watch. I find myself coping with the barrage of negative news by limiting my time on social media and only reading headlines once a day. I try to balance the bad news with good, so my world view stays optimistic. My favorite news app compiles purely uplifting stories about things like cool technology innovations, acts of human kindness, and animals being rescued. Positive energy combined with the rejuvenation of time spent outdoors enjoying our public lands is the fuel I need to keep fighting.

As you page through the Conservation Impact Report embedded in this newsletter, I hope you'll join me in feeling inspired and motivated to keep advocating for birds and other wildlife. Although, we face unprecedented threats to some of the world's most vital bird habitat, there are still opportunities to make a difference. We can't let up now. The accomplishments in the enclosed Conservation Impact Report show what's possible when we keep delivering the science-based conservation Audubon is known for. Preserving our public lands by providing public input into their management is just as crucial for our national heritage and culture as they are for wildlife.

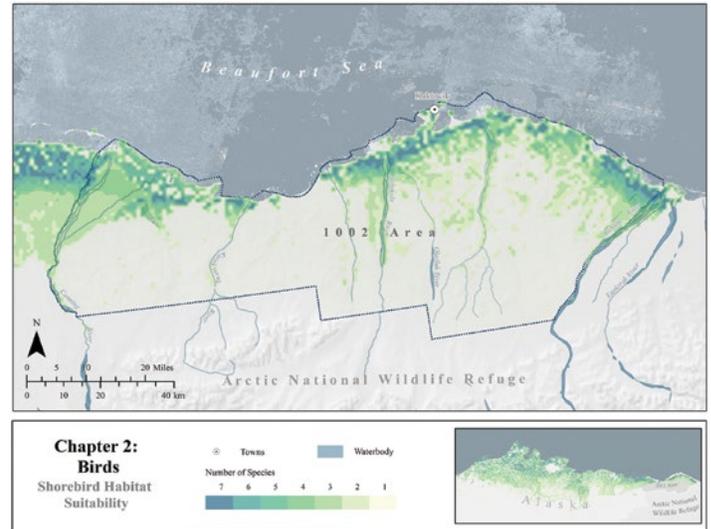
As a member of Audubon, you have been a crucial part of our past successes—and I can't thank you enough. I remain optimistic that by working together our collective voices and actions will continue to make a positive impact. Every day, we have opportunities to take action on the things we care about, whether it's submitting a public comment in an administrative process, calling a legislator, marching in peaceful protest, volunteering precious time, making a donation, or advocating in some other way—it all helps. This fall, we also have the opportunity to exercise our right to vote about the things we care about. I encourage you to be active, stay active, and when you need to recharge—go birding. ■

A Summer of Maps and Mentoring

Audubon Alaska recently partnered with Azavea and a University of Pennsylvania graduate student on a new project, the Ecological Analysis of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The project was a part of Azavea's Summer of Maps program, which brings together nonprofit organizations and skilled college students to work on projects that apply geospatial technology to address civic, social, and environmental challenges.

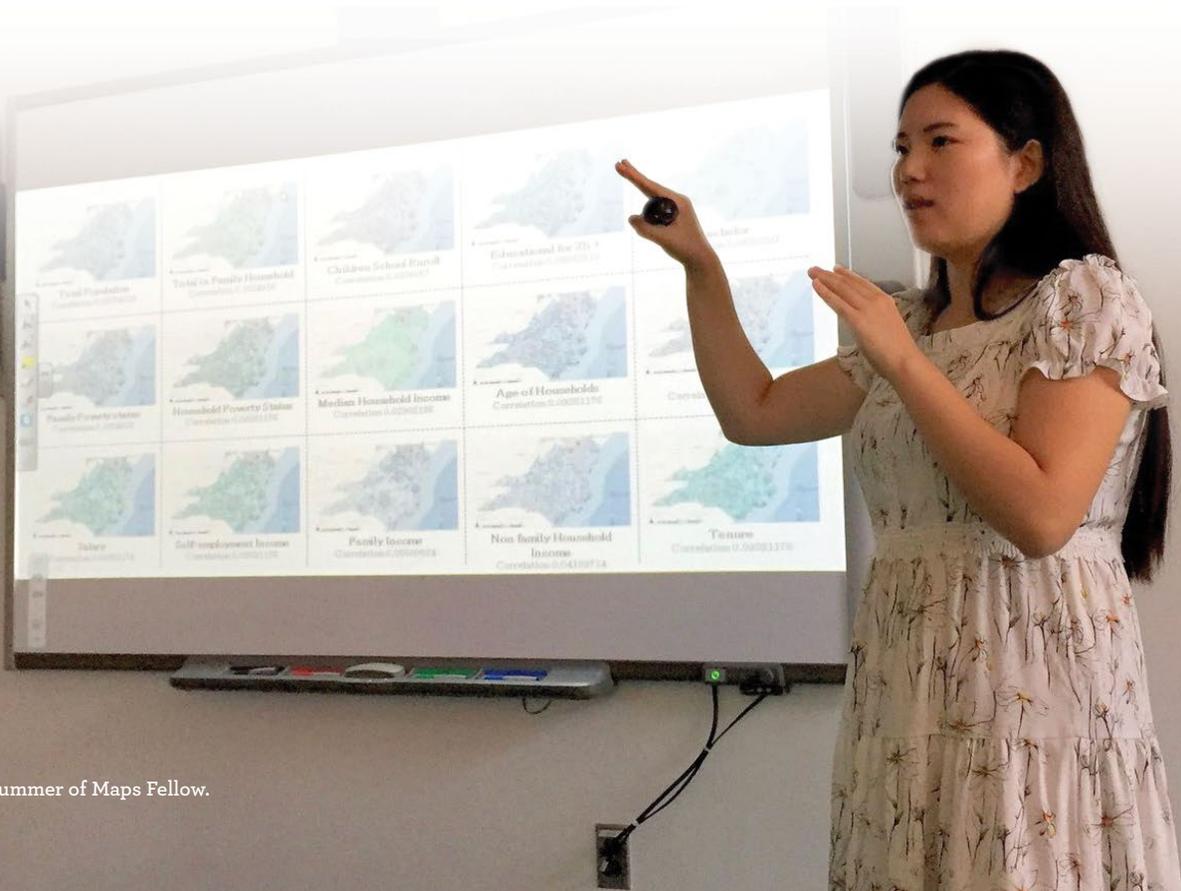
The goal of our project was to combine wildlife datasets to produce a series of maps depicting ecological characteristics of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain—also known as the 1002 Area—has recently been opened up to oil and gas development. As a potential lease sale approaches, there is an urgent need to compile, synthesize, and communicate the ecological importance of the area. Audubon Alaska will use the maps from this project as a foundation for a report highlighting the major ecological values of the Refuge's Coastal Plain.

Our fellow for the project was Xiao Wu, a graduate student in urban spatial analytics, landscape architecture, and regional planning. Her unique combination of technical abilities and creative design skills proved a perfect match for this complex project. Xiao worked closely with Audubon Alaska's Ben Sullender to develop a series of ten maps highlighting relevant issues such as polar bear denning habitat, bird habitat suitability, and the impacts of climate change on permafrost.



Map by Xiao Wu

Thanks to Xiao's efforts, Audubon Alaska is in an excellent position to continue work on a full report detailing key ecological values of the Arctic Refuge in relation to potential oil and gas development. The Azavea Summer of Maps fellowship program has allowed Audubon Alaska to take an enormous step forward as we work to understand and communicate the incredible importance of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. ■



Xiao Wu, Summer of Maps Fellow.

Chapter Happenings

Anchorage Audubon Society www.AnchorageAudubon.org

Anchorage Audubon had a fabulous summer this year. Our proudest moment was the completion of the newly expanded “Audubon Wayside” located on Anchorage’s Coastal Trail. This project has been years in the making. In the early 1990s, the leftover funds from the Business Park Wetlands project in Anchorage were given to Audubon. Thanks to attorney Thomas Klinkner, the funds were legally transferred to The Great Land Trust for wetlands preservation and awareness. The Great Land Trust was then able to move forward on Audubon’s idea of expanding the old “Audubon Bench” area to provide a larger and unobstructed viewing area of the extremely productive coastal marsh and mudflats.

The new Wayside also provides space to keep bikes and viewers off the existing trail which had previously been a safety hazard. Thanks to the Business Park Wetlands Coalition, Thomas Klinkner, the Great Land Trust, Pat Pourchot, Anchorage Parks & Rec., the Alaska Railroad, and all of the contractors involved. We love being a part of a project where everybody wins. ■

Juneau Audubon Society www.Juneau-Audubon-Society.org

Juneau Audubon Society completed the fourth year of the Tree Swallow nest box data project. This year we were able to have a student intern help with the data



Tree Swallow nest box.
Photograph by Delana Wilks

collection. Not only did Delana Wilks help with opening all the boxes to count eggs and young, she took lots of photos and kept our data organized. The data was then shared with the statewide Tree Swallow database. Many thanks to Delana for her excellent work and to the Alaska Songbird Institute for assistance in expanding our monitoring to include bird banding. We would also like to thank the many Juneau community volunteers who ensured the tree swallow boxes were in place before the swallows returned in mid-April. In 2018 we had nests in 32 of our 59 nest boxes!

We’d also like to thank the trip leaders for our summer outdoor adventures, which included a low tide walk in June; an alpine walk above the Mt. Roberts tram in July; and our most popular non-birding event, discovering our local mushrooms.

We begin our monthly free public lectures this October. They occur every 2nd Thursday from October to April and are held at UAS. ■

Kodiak Audubon Society www.kodiakaudubon.blogspot.com

Kodiak Audubon had a great summer hiking series again this year with more than 350 people taking advantage of the guided hikes. This fall we have a Birding and Breakfast event planned for the end of October where we invite the public to try out different spotting scopes and binoculars. On the conservation front, we are keeping tabs on a number of issues around the island including the expanding development out at the Kodiak Launch Complex. We also launched a small web store at the same time that we got a Square membership. Check it out at www.squareup.com/store/kodiak-audubon-society. ■

Prince William Sound Audubon Society

Prince William Sound Audubon Society held its first meetings of the 2018–2019 season. The meeting on September 18 featured a presentation on a sailing trip from Prince William Sound to the Aleutians by Cordova’s most famous sailors: Hamish and Kate Laird and their daughters. Our October 16 meeting featured Dr. Tom Kline presenting “Year of the Salmon.”

Our meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM, on the third floor of the Forest Service Building in Cordova. Please also mark your calendars for Cordova’s 46th Christmas Bird Count scheduled for Saturday, December 15. Intrepid out-of-town birders who want to join us are welcome! ■



Wayside caption.
Photograph by Matt McMillan/GLT

Advocacy Corner

Federal agencies, like the Department of the Interior or the Environmental Protection Agency, write the plans and regulations that manage our lands, waterways, and the wildlife who live there. When a major federal action on public land is proposed by an agency, it kicks off the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. Many of the conservation threats facing Alaska today are going through the NEPA process. Concerned citizens and organizations like Audubon are able to contribute their ideas and concerns at different stages of the process. We often ask you to get involved during these public comment periods to raise your voice for birds and other wildlife. However, the single best way to protect birds and their habitat is to vote! The people we elect appoint the federal agency leaders who make decisions on the federal public lands and the vital ecosystems we care about.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM: HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



CAPITOL HILL

The **Legislative Branch** writes the laws and controls the funding.

We work on issues such as proposed legislation to amend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that would reduce accountability for preventable bird deaths. These advocacy efforts are aimed at the Legislative branch.

Get involved! Sign up for Action Alerts and we will notify you when it is time to contact members of Congress about legislative issues.

You can also help by supporting Audubon. We work to get good science in front of lawmakers to help them make sound decisions.



WHITE HOUSE

The **Administrative Branch** executes the law. The President appoints agency leaders such as the Secretary of the Interior.

We are actively advocating to protect the Arctic Refuge from oil development and oppose clear-cutting large-tree old-growth in the Tongass. These efforts are focused on agencies within the Administrative branch.

Get involved! Sign up for Action Alerts and we will notify you when it is time to write comment letters to agencies or testify at public hearings.

You can also help by supporting Audubon. We work to supply science and insights to federal agencies.



FEDERAL COURT SYSTEM

The **Judicial Branch** interprets and applies the law.

Audubon and environmental partners recently filed a lawsuit over a land exchange in Izembek National Wildlife Refuge that will disturb vulnerable bird populations. The action taken by the Dept. of the Interior circumvented the NEPA process. The lawsuit is an example of how we work within the Judicial branch to hold agencies accountable to environmental laws.

You can help by supporting Audubon and other organizations that carefully weigh whether or not to litigate. ■

The most important thing you can do is VOTE!



Sign up for Action Alerts

Lawmakers care about your views and opinions. Sign up for Audubon Alaska's mailing list to receive our Action Alerts. We'll keep you updated on the latest issues and explain how you can make a difference. Go to ak.audubon.org. Plus, join us every week on Facebook and Twitter for #TakeActionTuesdays. ■

Photograph by Milo Burcham

WatchList Quiz Bird

Can you identify this species from the WatchList?

Answer on page 6.



People of Audubon

BOARD



This fall, we say good-bye to **Matt Kirchoff** who is terming off of the board. Matt has a long history with Audubon Alaska first as our director of bird conservation and then as a board member. Throughout his tenure, he has brought valuable expertise, wisdom, and leadership to Audubon. We thank Matt

for his service and dedication to realizing our mission. He will be missed, but we plan to stay in touch! ■

STAFF



Audubon Alaska welcomes **Kassandra Smith** who joined Audubon Alaska in May 2018 as our new office manager. She is a longtime resident of Anchorage, Alaska. She has a varied background in corporate legal support, office administration, customer service, and tech support.

Outside of the office, Kassandra has worked as a poll worker in every election since she became eligible to do so. She spends much of her free time reading an unhealthy amount of romance novels, exercising her inner movie critic, and working to perfect her disc golf putting game in the summer. ■



Audubon Alaska welcomes **Rebecca Sentner** who joined Audubon Alaska in late July 2018 as our new communications manager. Rebecca has a passion for wildlife conservation and a strong background in non-profit marketing, communications, and fundraising. She has a bachelor's degree in communication and a certificate in applied animal behavior.

She and her husband moved to Alaska in 2014 after visiting several times and falling in love with it. In her free time, she enjoys music, gardening, camping, hiking, kayaking, and cross-country skiing. ■

Greetings from the Pacific Golden-Plover

I am honored to be Audubon Alaska's 2018 Bird of the Year. As a shorebird who breeds in Western Alaska, I truly appreciate the work they do to conserve the wild places my friends and I call home. Please help protect Alaska's precious habitats by making a donation to Audubon Alaska today. Your support makes a difference for birds and other wildlife now and for generations to come.

Thank you!



Answer to WatchList Quiz

Spectacled Eider

Somateria fischeri



The distinctive, large, round patch of feathers around the eye gives this medium-sized sea duck the appearance of wearing spectacles. This makes them easy to distinguish from other ducks including other eiders. Spectacled Eiders were federally listed as threatened following significant declines in western Alaska (more than 90%). But over the past decade, they have been slowly recovering. *Photograph by William Pohley*

Black-capped Chickadee.

Photograph by Becky O'Neill/Audubon Photography Awards 2017



Christmas Bird Count: Starting a New Tradition

In the late 19th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas “Side Hunt.” Going out with their guns, they competed to see who could bring in the most feathered (and furred) quarry.

Around the same time, many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a “Christmas Bird Census” that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them. And so the Christmas Bird Count began on Christmas Day 1900.

Today, thousands of volunteers throughout North and South America head outdoors each year to take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations and to help guide conservation efforts.

Christmas Bird Count occurs between December 14 and January 5. Birders interested in participating can sign up in November on Audubon’s website at www.christmasbirdcount.org.

Fun Facts about the Christmas Bird Count:

- This year is the 119th year of the Christmas Bird Count.
- It is the nation’s longest-running community science bird project.
- The first Alaska Christmas Bird Counts were in 1941 in Anchorage and Mountain Village.
- Prudhoe Bay is the northern most Christmas Bird Count.
- Utqiagvik (formally Barrow) did a bird count one year, but they didn’t see any birds (which is still useful information!). ■

WatchList Success Story: The Emperor Goose

While there were new species added to Audubon's 2017 Alaska WatchList: Red List of Declining Bird Populations, we are pleased to announce that some species warranted removal. One of these success stories comes in the form of the Emperor Goose.

New management practices helped the Emperor Goose population rebound in recent years after significant declines of population in the early 1980s. As a result, we cautiously removed the Emperor Goose from our Red WatchList in 2017, though it remains a vulnerable species.

A beautiful and distinctive goose, the Emperor Goose spends its whole life in Alaska and the Russian Far East. Its breeding grounds are located on both sides of the Bering Sea and it

moves between these spots and coastal wintering grounds along the Aleutians and the Alaska Peninsula. Izembek Lagoon and Kodiak Island are two very important habitats of note for Emperor Geese in the winter.

Audubon Alaska advocates for keeping these important areas protected for the Emperor Goose and other birds. Audubon has joined with our partners to file a lawsuit opposing a recent land exchange that would allow a road through the vital habitat within the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. The lawsuit challenges the land exchange on several legal grounds and we expect a court decision sometime in the next several months to a year. Stay tuned for more details on the court case in our eNews, on social media, and on our website. ■



Emperor Goose.
Photograph by Milo Burcham

Sign up for Our Monthly E-Newsletter

Today's news cycle can make your head spin. The Trump administration began its assault on our public lands on day one, and the barrage has continued. So much happens on a daily basis that it can be hard to keep it all straight. Sign up for Audubon Alaska's e-newsletters to receive concise monthly recaps, as well as information about actions you can take to stand up for birds and the wild places they need. We also announce upcoming events and birding opportunities. Visit www.AudubonAlaska.org to sign up!