



Audubon | ALASKA

# Impact Report

2023



Bluethroat

# Meeting the Moment for Birds and the Planet

Audubon's efforts to protect birds and the places they need require cutting-edge science, innovative conservation methods, and birders of all stripes who care and who act—so thank you! Our vast network makes us a powerful force for conservation, with the ability to catalyze actions at the scale of the challenges we face.

In response to the loss of 3 billion birds over the last 50 years and the compounding threats of climate change, Audubon is embarking on a new strategic direction to maximize our impact. Touching down in every office, center, and community we work in, we are shaping a future where birds and people thrive. We will protect more habitat, accelerate renewable energy, advance bird-friendly policies, engage

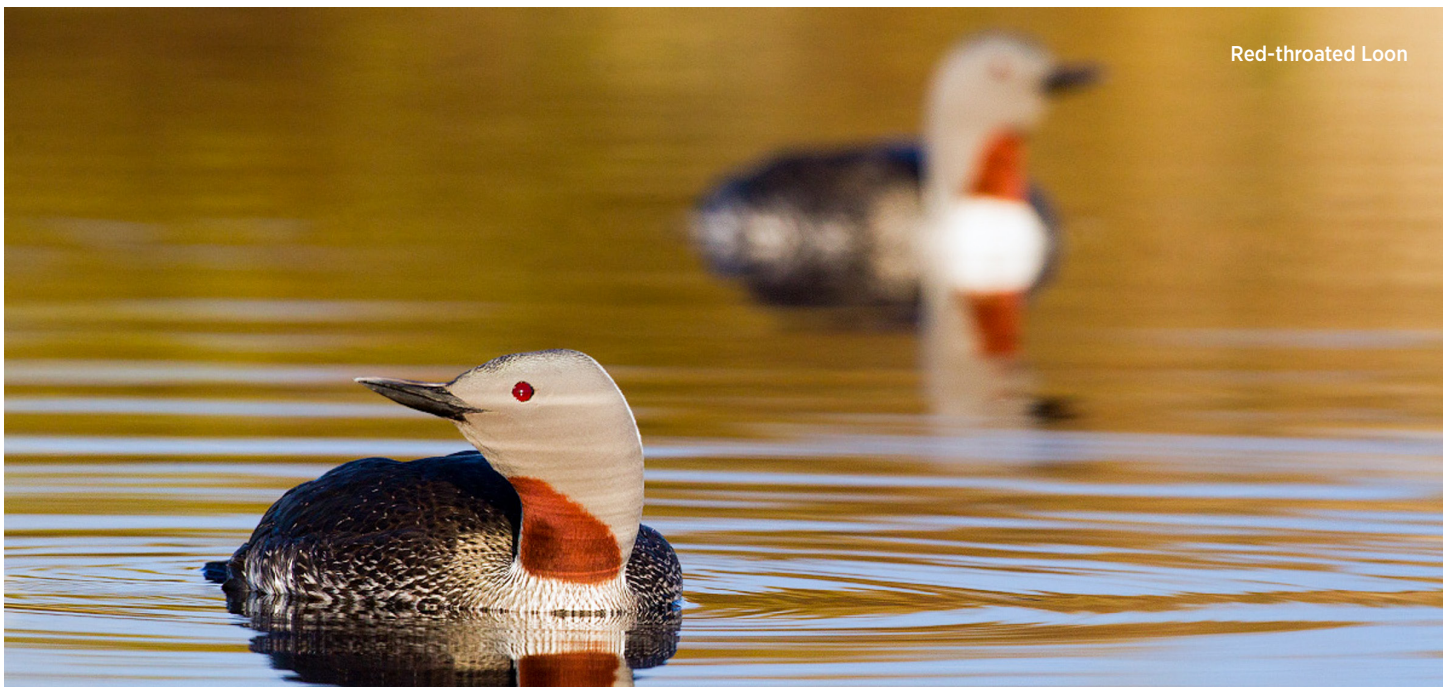
broader constituencies, and build upon our conservation achievements from last year.

Some of our top 2023 accomplishments across Audubon include:

- Audubon Alaska and National Audubon's public lands teams engaged at the highest level of government to advocate for new protections and policies to safeguard America's Arctic. This included the initiation of a formal rulemaking for the Western Arctic's 13 million acres of Special Areas and a new environmental review for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's coastal plain.
- Audubon helped advance the Inflation Reduction Act and the

Growing Climate Solutions Act—historic legislation that will provide numerous benefits to birds and people.

- CEO Elizabeth Gray attended the U.S. Climate Action Summit and shared Audubon's efforts to tackle climate change through maintaining and restoring natural climate solutions and supporting responsibly sited renewable energy.
- The Audubon Conservation Ranching Program certified its 100th ranch as bird-friendly, and we are ending the year with a total of 111 certified ranches covering 2.8 million acres.
- Our Conserva Aves team completed its first request for



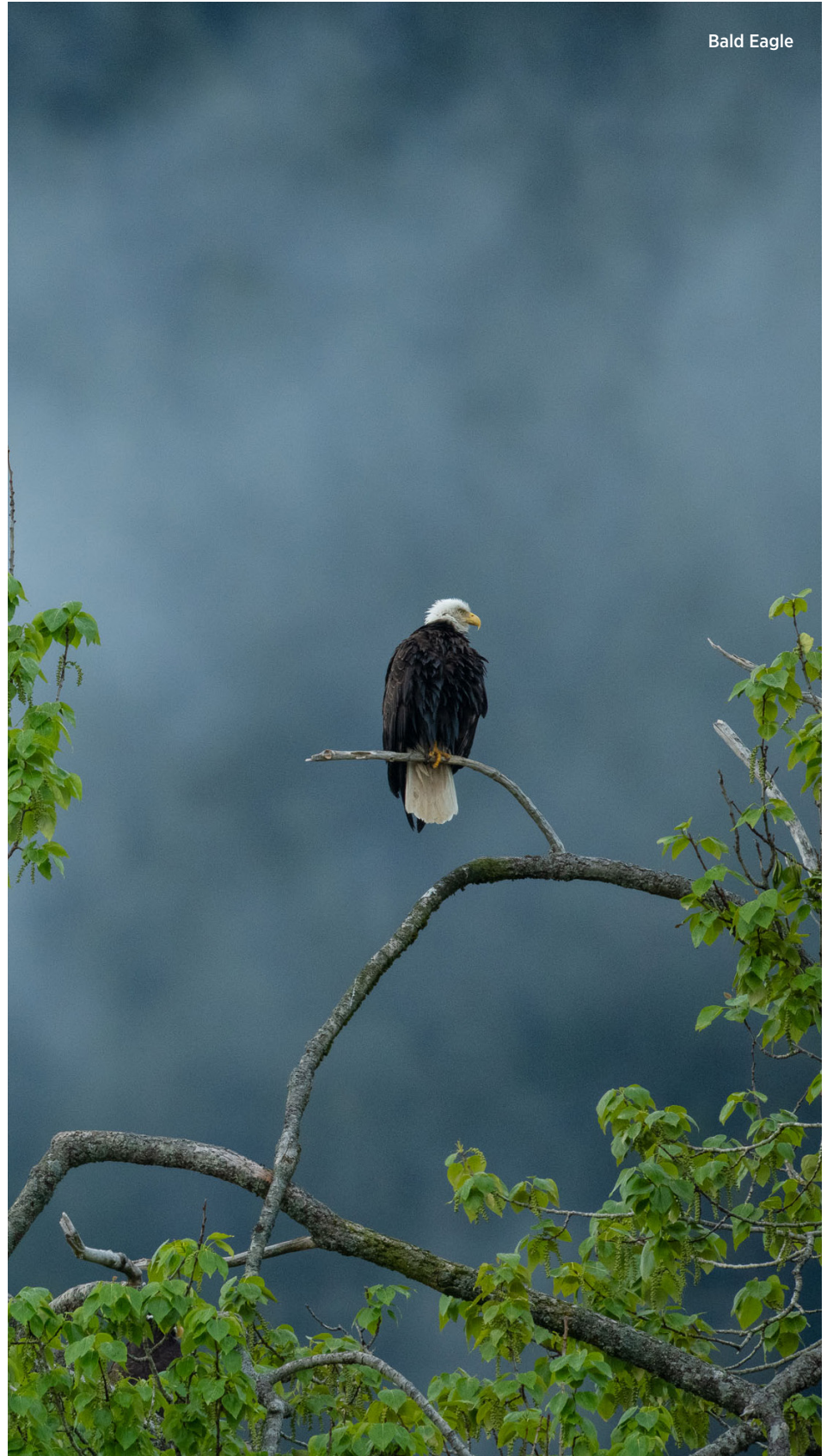
Red-throated Loon

proposals in Colombia, selecting 12 initial projects covering more than 30,000 hectares.

- Audubon celebrated its years of advocacy when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that they had vetoed the Proposed Pebble Mine in southwest Alaska.
- Our Clean Energy Initiative engaged with developers, agencies, conservation organizations, and the Audubon network on more than 20 Gigawatts of proposed wind, solar, and transmission projects, including the SunZia transmission project in New Mexico and Arizona—one of the largest clean energy infrastructure projects in American history.
- Audubon Alaska launched the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail Mobile Application for iPhone and Android. This first-of-its-kind platform offers maps, site details and directions, and species checklists for nearly 200 birding sites across 18 communities in Southeast Alaska.

We are ready to meet this critical moment for birds and the planet and are grateful for partners like you who help support and advance our conservation efforts—from Alaska’s Bristol Bay and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the forests of Colombia, South America.

Thank you for supporting the important work we’re doing in Alaska and for the billions of birds from all 50 states and six flyways that feed, breed, and nest in Alaska.



Bald Eagle

# Habitat Conservation



The Western Arctic supports the 40,000-head Teshekpuk Caribou Herd throughout their lifecycle.

## **Through Three Historic Actions, America's Arctic is Safer for Birds and More Resilient to the Impacts of Climate Change**

Audubon's network of members—both inside and outside of Alaska—has been crucial in safeguarding the biologically rich 19.6-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Since the 2017 tax bill opened the Refuge's coastal plain to oil development, we've worked to ensure that this irreplaceable landscape remains free from all development.

In the Western Arctic, Audubon continues to lead the way in safeguarding the region's unique

ecological values and designated Special Areas while constraining oil development. Here, our work focuses on deep public policy that finds solutions for both nature and people.

This year, our efforts began paying off through three historic actions:

- In the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Department of the Interior canceled the illegally issued coastal plain leases held by the State of Alaska.
- Following the lease cancellation, the Biden administration issued a draft Supplemental Environmental

Impact Statement (SEIS) that better recognizes the conservation needs and cultural importance of the Refuge, a much-needed step to reassess the earlier review of this landscape.

- The Biden administration initiated a formal rulemaking that would strengthen protections for over 13 million acres of the Western Arctic, encompassing ecologically important wetlands that provide habitat for tens of thousands of waterfowl and nesting shorebirds, as well as supporting the 40,000-head Teshekpuk Caribou herd.

# Climate Action

## Tullik's Odyssey

This one-of-a-kind storytelling project follows the southbound migration of eight GPS-tagged American Golden-Plovers—which make one of the longest migration journeys of any shorebird—from Arctic Alaska across Boreal Canada and down to South America. The project, in partnership with the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Alaska Region, highlights the effects of climate change on this species and other migratory birds. It showcase the impacts of habitat loss, the importance of invertebrates as a food source, and the intensification of storms due to a changing climate.



American Golden Plover



Pigeon Guillemot

## National Roadless Rule Reinstated for Tongass National Forest

Early this year, Audubon Alaska celebrated a victory following years of climate and habitat advocacy work across multiple administrations. On January 25, 2023, the National Roadless Rule was officially reinstated for the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska. This action fully restores Roadless Rule protections for more than 9.3 million acres of the 17-million-acre Tongass National Forest—a temperate rainforest full of old-growth and mature stands of trees. In addition to being the ancestral homeland of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples and important habitat for 350 species of birds, the Tongass is the country's largest national forest and greatest forest carbon sink, holding approximately 20% of all carbon stored in the U.S. National Forest System.

# Celebrating Policy Wins for Alaska's People & Birds



Snow Geese

## Protecting America's Arctic

Over the past year, Audubon Alaska and National Audubon's public lands teams worked tirelessly to inform and advance novel conservation policy for America's Arctic. This work included the launch of a formal rulemaking process to advance the protection and stewardship of the Western Arctic's 13 million acres of designated Special Areas. These efforts also included the initiation of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's coastal plain. Both of these efforts will help ensure the protection of these irreplaceable landscapes and their resilience in a climatically changed future.



Tufted Puffin

## Ambler Road

The proposed 211-mile Ambler Road would be a private, industrial access corridor that would cut through Alaska's Brooks Range, connecting the Dalton Highway to a new massive mining district in one of the wildest places in the world. Audubon Alaska, working with a coalition of Tribal governments, conservationists, and local businesses, is urging revocation of the permits needed to build this harmful road. Over the coming months, Audubon will continue to deploy legal, policy, and public engagement tools in order to safeguard this region from infrastructure and mining.

## Pebble Mine

For years, Audubon Alaska—along with conservation partners, Alaska Native communities, commercial and sport fishermen, and concerned citizens—have worked to stop the proposed Pebble Mine. On January 30 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, citing a provision of the Clean Water Act, vetoed the project in southwest Alaska. The proposed open pit mine would be built at the headwaters of Bristol Bay, home to one of the world's greatest concentration of seabirds, dozens of Important Bird Areas, and the world's largest salmon runs.



Blackpoll Warbler

# Community Building



Audubon Alaska GIS Analyst Tory Elmore attending the Utqiagvik Shorebird Festival.

## Engaging with Communities Through Equitable Access to Nature

This year, Audubon Alaska staff attended multiple community events, including Potter Marsh Discovery Day in Anchorage, numerous birding festivals throughout the state, and the Barrow Arctic Research Center’s Science & Culture Fair in Utqiagvik. We also hosted Anchorage-based events like the LGBT (Let’s Go Birding Together) Pride Bird Walk at Chanshtnu/Westchester Lagoon and “An Evening with Wildlife Photographer Acacia Johnson”—a free, public evening of wildlife photography at a local brewery.

This December, Audubon Alaska hosted the “Art and Conservation Night” during the Alaska Bird Conference. This one-night event to #BringBirdsBack through the celebration of art and conservation took place at the Anchorage Museum at

Rasmuson Center. There were lectures from accomplished scientists and conservationists, wildlife conservation photographers, an art fair with roughly 20 artists, and information booths from nonprofit conservation organizations.

## Inaugural Launch of Utqiagvik Shorebird Festival

In the northernmost village of Alaska, the first-ever Utqiagvik Shorebird Festival—sponsored by Audubon Alaska, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other regional entities—was held this year. This free festival provided an opportunity for the Utqiagvik community to highlight the natural beauty of the region and offer festival attendees access to bird walks, artist workshops, speakers, and storytellers. Birding festivals like this one help drive non-consumptive tourism, boost local economies, and help conserve healthy natural environments.

## THE SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRDING TRAIL MOBILE APP IS HERE

The outdoor recreation industry and nature-based tourism, which both rely on healthy, intact ecosystems, are increasingly major components of the Southeast Alaska economy. Audubon Alaska’s Southeast Alaska Birding Trail Mobile Application, which was launched at the Yakutat Tern Festival in June, is helping to contribute to the growth of these local economies by bringing attention to the region’s rich birding opportunities. The app includes a curated list of nearly 200 birding sites among 18 communities, including Mendenhall Wetlands in Juneau, Bear Paw Lake in Hoonah, and Ward Lake in Ketchikan.

Birders at the 2023 Yakutat Tern Festival, where the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail app was launched.



# With Gratitude

Audubon Alaska made significant strides toward our mission to protect birds and the places they need over the last year—successes that would not have been possible without your continued support. Building upon this year’s progress, we are primed for greater impact in 2024. Over the coming months, we seek to:

- Block the Ambler Road and safeguard the ecological integrity of the southern Brooks Range.
- Finalize a robust, science-based conservation rule for the Western Arctic’s 13 million acres of designated Special Areas.
- Ensure that the Chilkat Valley, a globally Important Bird Area near Haines, Alaska, remains free from all mining activity.

We are deeply grateful for your continued commitment to protecting birds and the places they need, in Alaska and beyond. **Thank you.**

## Our Office

431 West 7th Ave., Suite 205  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
907-276-7034

[ak.audubon.org](http://ak.audubon.org)

## Contact

### David Krause

Interim Executive Director and  
Director of Conservation  
[david.krause@audubon.org](mailto:david.krause@audubon.org)

### Michelle Moga

Director of Individual Development  
[michelle.moga@audubon.org](mailto:michelle.moga@audubon.org)

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