



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

# Sierra Borealis *alaska report*

SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER  
DECEMBER 2024



**Vote** in Chapter election - see p. 4

## Izembek Wilderness threatened - YOUR comments needed on EIS by December 30

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, one of the most ecologically significant areas in the world, is under threat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now accepting public comments, through Dec 30, on a proposed land swap, unfortunately endorsed by the Biden administration, that would pave the way (literally) for a road through designated wilderness of this remote refuge.

This is a very important issue for our National Wilderness Preservation System and all the 150 million acres of Alaska National Conservation System lands protected by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), including National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks, National Forests and Wild and Scenic Rivers. If anyone who wants to build a road through existing wilderness can orchestrate a land exchange with help of a corporation or the state to get a particular area deleted from wilderness in order to build a road, it devastates our System and the idea of protection of land "in perpetuity".

The proposed land exchange risks:

➔ Featured in this issue:	
Izembek comments needed	pp. 1-2
Act to protect Arctic Refuge	p. 3
Fed. Subsistence Board expanded	p. 3
Chapter Election: VOTE	p. 4
Knik Arm Tunnel vs Rail	p. 4
Essay: Where the Tide is loudest	pp. 5-6
BLM issues Central Yukon Plan	p. 6
Outings and events	p. 7
Arctic bird in trouble	p. 8

- Destroying critical habitat for species like the Pacific black brant, emperor geese, Steller's eiders, and more.
- Disrupt-

ing subsistence lifestyles and cultural traditions for Alaska Native communities.

- Setting a dangerous precedent that could harm public lands across the country.

The public comment period for this alarming proposal



photo: Vicky Hoover

Wild Izembek Refuge--Wilderness and lagoons

is open until Dec. 30, 2024, and we need **your voice** to defend Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness.

Alaska's Izembek National Wildlife Refuge was the first designated Ramsar wetland site in the U.S. This is from the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, <https://www.ramsar.org/>, an international treaty for the conservation of wetlands. The biological heart of the Izembek Refuge is Izembek Lagoon, with one of the world's largest eelgrass beds. Nearly the world's entire population of Pacific brant uses the lagoon eelgrass during migration, as do a vast array of other migrating birds. Most of the Refuge is designated federal wilderness. -- continued page 2

## Comment for Izembek EIS by Dec. 30 -- from p. 1

In a draft environmental impact statement released in mid-November, the Fish and Wildlife Service recommended a multi-part swap of land between the federal government and a for-profit Native corporation to free up a corridor for an 18.9-mile road cutting through what is currently designated wilderness in the 310,000-acre refuge.

The road would connect King Cove, a mostly Aleut community of nearly 900 people, with the airport at Cold Bay, a community about 18 miles away by air, with an airport that has a long, jet-accommodating runway.

(Information above from a National Wildlife Refuge Association alert, <https://www.refugeassociation.org/advocacy-izembek-oppose-the-road> and some additional background from AK Public Media: <https://alaskapublic.org/2024/11/14/biden-administration-gives-support-to-controversial-land-trade-in-alaska-wildlife-refuge/>.)

**A few talking points for your comments** on this particular land exchange that involves Congressionally designated Wilderness: first the basics:

1. The lands being offered in exchange do not have anywhere near the habitat value of the land being given up, which features unparalleled essential eel grass feeding grounds for countless land and avian species.

2. Some 70 Indigenous tribes in Alaska oppose the land exchange. (They depend on subsistence hunting the black brant that stop at Izembek to feed on the exceptionally nutritious and abundant eel grasses, and they do not want this feeding habitat harmed.)

3. After an extensive process, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, in the Obama Administration, found that a land exchange involving Izembek was not in the public interest and rejected it.

4. The initial reason for the previous push for this wilderness road was to provide an easier way to market for products of the local fish cannery, but that has since closed; no longer an issue.

5. The announced aim of the small community of King Cove has been to seek better medical evacuation ability from a road connection to the major airfield at the Cold Bay community- at the other end of the proposed road. A much better option is a marine option; and \$43.3 million dollars in funds have already been committed under the Infrastructure Invest and Jobs Act to improve the dock for medical emergencies and more.

6. Even if a road were built, winter storms would make it dangerous and unsafe to use for almost half of the year. And, part of the proposed road would go through wetlands, with enormous environmental impact.

Second—more ideas, if you wish to add extra power to your comment:

1. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), allows for land exchanges only if the purpose is to benefit conservation or subsistence values of the area involved. The Secretary does not have the statutory authority to make this exchange – period. And, the exchange violates or significantly undermines

other key provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, with dire consequences for all 150 million acres of national lands currently protected in Alaska.

2. A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers analysis indicates that non-road alternatives would be more effective and safer than a road. Not only is winter danger a concern, but the cost of maintaining such a road would be prohibitive compared to non-road options (as identified in a 2015 study)

3. The Biden Administration's 30 x 30 initiative, (conserving 30 percent of our nation's lands and waters by 2030), dubbed "America the Beautiful", calls for conserving more natural habitat now--not opening such key lands to development; instead, nature protection must be expanded now, NOT reduced.

To summarize: Urge this exchange be rejected for undermining biodiversity, accelerating climate change, compromising ecosystem services, harming environmental justice, and undermining the 30x30 initiative.

### How to Submit Public Comments

Public comments will be accepted until December 30, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (7:59 pm in Alaska) There are three ways to submit public comments:

- On the Regulations.gov page announcing the availability of the draft SEIS.
- By U.S. mail: Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-R7-NWRS-2023-0072; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: PRB/3W; 5275 Leesburg Pike; Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.
- By testifying at a public meeting that will be held during the public comment period.

Getting to the Regulations page to comment online--Go to: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FWS-R7-NWRS-2023-0072>. Then, click on "Docket Documents".

You will see the "Notice of Availability ...for a Potential Land Exchange...." The comment box right underneath the title-is where you place your comment to oppose the land exchange. You can also visit: <https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove->

THANK you for commenting: YOUR VOICE MATTERS! ❖



--from map in Izembek Refuge Visitor Center, in Cold Bay Refuge headquarters, showing location of Refuge on Alaska Peninsula

# Comment Now to Protect the Arctic Refuge

⇒ YOU can help stop AIDEA from bidding on a lease!

Due to requirements in the 2017 Tax Act, we know there will be another lease sale for the Arctic Refuge before President Biden leaves office; it is now planned for Jan. 9, 2025. The previous lease sale held in 2021 saw very little success with no major oil companies bidding. The highest bidder by far was the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA). AIDEA is a public corporation in our state that is supposed to be beholden to the public in Alaska. However, instead AIDEA has a track record of making poor investments while flagrantly making it difficult for the public to participate in their decision-making processes.

Drilling in the sensitive, fragile Arctic Refuge coastal plain is bad business, and we hope that AIDEA finally sees that. We ask people interested in preserving the very special region to write to AIDEA urging them NOT TO BID in the upcoming lease sale. Let's turn the page on this dark chapter and keep our vital habitat and wildernesses wild while exploring better financial investments for our state's future.

## ⇒ HOW to comment:

Your letters can be emailed to [communications@aidea.org](mailto:communications@aidea.org) or sent via physical mail to:

AIDEA BOARD  
813 W Northern Lights Blvd.  
Anchorage, AK 99503

## Some points to use in your comment urging

### AIDEA not to bid:

- the Arctic Refuge is an irreplaceable wilderness that should be kept intact;
- development would impact the wildlife of the region in irreparable ways;
- the Gwich'in people rely on the region for subsistence culture and have asked repeatedly for AIDEA and the state to leave their traditional homelands alone;
- It's a bad investment. There is a reason that no major oil companies bid in the last lease sale AND paid money to return existing leases. Drilling in the region is too expensive and risky. And, as renewable energy becomes more prevalent and less costly, fossil fuel investments make less and less sense.
- AIDEA has wasted enough of Alaskans' money on these leases and the associated lawsuits. Let's move on and explore better investments for our state.

Finally, please copy your state house rep and senator on your email comment or send them a picture of your written comment to ensure they know AIDEA is hearing from the public. ⇒ Comment before January 9. ❖

-- Andrea Feniger



Caribou at edge of coastal plain

## Secretary Haaland expands the Federal Subsistence Board Subsistence representatives are now Board majority

In October, Secretary of the Interior Deborah Haaland added three representatives of subsistence users to the Federal Subsistence Board, bringing to six the number of subsistence representatives. Her action expanded the board to 11 members. On the Federal side are the five regional directors of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and

Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and the Forest Service.

### Background

In 2022 at the request of the Native community, Interior held listening sessions and consultations with Tribal organizations, Native village

and regional corporations, and other Native organizations to receive testimony on the effects of climate change on subsistence fish and wildlife resources, hunting and fishing practices, and subsistence values and culture.

Respondents listed habitat deterioration, reduced wildlife numbers, changing wildlife migrations, fewer fish in warming rivers, streams and oceans, and more difficulty in securing adequate amounts of subsistence foods.

Among the respondents' numerous recommendations were to increase the subsistence representatives on the Federal Subsistence Board and other subsistence-related decision-making bodies, and the Secretary should more actively promote subsistence interests and values. As noted, in response Haaland expanded the FSB and stepped up supervision and monitoring of the subsistence program.

Had the Harris-Walz ticket prevailed in November, Haaland's expansion of the Board would have taken root. Now the incoming President pledges to drastically reduce the size and scope of the federal bureaucracy and purge top-level staff in the various departments. The five federal agencies noted may be hit with the Board as collateral damage. ❖

-- Jack Hession



Salmon - Israel Shotridge

## Alaska Chapter Election:

Please VOTE in our Chapter election to support our Chair in her reelection campaign (No other ExCom candidate has appeared)

**VOTING** will occur on our Chapter website from the last week in January 2025 through mid February.

Adrienne Canino has been volunteering with the Sierra Club Alaska Chapter ExCom since she moved to the state in 2020. She started as Treasurer and in the past year, has transitioned to be Chair of the ExCom.

As an environmentalist, Adrienne has planted trees, written letters, knocked on doors, and crunched data. As a member of SC Alaska Chapter Executive Committee, and if reelected as chair, Adrienne aims to strengthen the Chapter's basic components, like ExCom meetings and supporting Chapter campaigns, while also facilitating the Chapter's growth in the opportunities Alaska is well poised to take advantage of in the next two years. Her day job is in the data-rich research landscape of Alaska, even though a peek into her home in Anchorage may imply it's her job to collect books. ❖



Adrienne Canino

## Feasibility study for a Knik Arm highway tunnel? We need a rail alternative.

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities plans to spend \$1 million to study the feasibility of building a tunnel underneath Knik Arm to connect Anchorage to the Matsu Valley, the fastest growing region in the state (Anchorage Daily News, Nov 18, 2024).

This tunnel idea is the latest iteration of a sprawl-inducing plan that has been around since the 1950s: building a bridge across Knik Arm. The Knik Arm bridge idea has faced opposition due to its projected costs (in the billions of dollars), the disruption of one of Anchorage's oldest and most walkable neighborhoods (Government Hill) and its environmental requirements under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The multi-lane Glenn Highway already connects Anchorage to the Matsu Valley, carrying 33,000 cars per weekday. In 2018, a truck crashed into a Glenn Highway overpass, closing southbound lanes for hours and causing

epic traffic jams. The Nov. 30 earthquake later that year damaged bridges over the highway. For these and other reasons, ADOT & PF planners now say that, because the Glenn Highway is critical for the military and to truck

food, fuel and medicine north of Anchorage, we need a backup.

But to be meaningful and complete, this feasibility study must include transportation alternatives to a tunnel, particularly commuter rail and more freight rail with the Alaska Railroad Corporation. We don't need to build additional highways or highway tunnels out of Anchorage for security or for any other reason when we already have our State-owned railroad running parallel to the Glenn Highway.

Concerning the 2018 damage to the Glenn Highway overpass and bridges, and the need for a "backup", the railroad could have easily been that backup if proper planning had occurred. And the railroad could be that backup in the future. [And see *Transit Options* event, p. 7]

Finally, the additional sprawl created by bringing more highway vehicles into the undisturbed nature of the Point McKenzie area would add greenhouse gas emissions at a time when the Municipality of Anchorage is trying to adopt another climate action plan.

To learn more about commuter rail, see the Alaska Commuter Rail Coalition at [www.commuterrailak.com](http://www.commuterrailak.com). ❖

-- by Cynthia Wentworth, based on her Letter to Editor, that ran in the Anchorage Daily News Nov. 29.

Also see **sierra borealis** articles on commuter rail by Cynthia Wentworth of Sept `10, Sept 16, Jun 17, Sept & Dec 22, Dec 23.)



# Where the Tide Is the Loudest Sound

## A gold mine intrudes on a quiet Alaskan refuge



- (From an article in Sierra magazine, November 26, 2024 -- by [Dustin Solberg](#)

Summer days on a fishing boat in Alaska stretch on and on, luxuriously so. Twilight comes long past my bedtime, but that doesn't mean more time. If winter is for getting ready, summer means showtime. This is when the waterfront cannery where I set out in my boat for the first day of the commercial fishing season churns with life. It runs full tilt for as long as the sockeye are running.

In a good year, every sockeye salmon in the boat is another \$10 bill, so it pays to be rested, ready, and focused, above all else, on fish. Even so, on a July morning, I steered my family's skiff not to the fishing grounds but to a quiet island, where we jumped out of the boat and began walking and then scrambling uphill. Up to the 2,674-foot top of a sloping rock, the angle of its tilting stratigraphy revealing some great geologic drama. We climbed in a direction Hamish, my friend and guide, called *direttissima*. "The most directest route," he clarified. There is no trail.

Some like to climb a summit "because it's there." Not me. I skipped a day of work to stand atop Chisik Island and do nothing more than look out at Tuxedni Bay, a wild 15-mile-long nook along Cook Inlet's west side. I tried to steel myself to picture what it might become. A mining company wants to build a big industrial port in an area called the Johnson Tract. They want to haul away the ore and offer it up for sale to a world gone mad for gold.

Even by Alaska standards, Tuxedni Bay stands out. A Dena'ina name for this place, Tuk'ezitnu, isn't printed on the maps, but it predates them all. Pictographs on a rock wall shed a sliver of light on a long Indigenous presence here. A friend once showed me something wondrous on a Tuxedni beach: a beautiful and perfectly symmetrical oil lamp for burning what would have been the most available oil, seal oil, carved in a dark granitic stone.

Today, much of the land around Tuxedni Bay is in a national park called Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, which is fine enough, though it's a wonder nobody named it Tuxedni Bay National Park instead. It's quiet. There are no roads and no towns. No street lights or power lines. But there are brown bears. Wolverines. Wolves. In towering cottonwood trees, it's easy to spot the gargantuan nests of bald eagles. Of the world's remaining 331 endangered Cook Inlet beluga whales, many come here to feed on fish—and, scientists say, to bask in quiet refuge from a built-up world.

In Tuxedni Bay, you can hold remnants of the Jurassic world—fossils of giant clams and ammonites that fit in the palm of your hand. On a clear day, you can watch fumaroles rise above the glaciated slopes of Iliamna

and Redoubt volcanoes. You can almost feel the last ice age too, and the land most certainly can because, without the weight of glaciers, it's rebounding and lifting at a pace people can see in a lifetime.

One person who left his mark, though, certainly never set foot here: Theodore Roosevelt. Chisik Island is part of a refuge he created in 1909 with a one-page executive order. It was an era of heightened concern for some of the continent's more charismatic bird species, and Roosevelt believed in protecting habitat. Roosevelt's presidential signature protected places for the seabirds that fill this otherwise infinitesimally quiet place with raucous walls of sound: Puffins, murres, and kittiwakes rule the skies here, except when peregrine falcons and bald eagles soar up along cliff-side nesting colonies where the rock is white with guano.

After exactly two hours of scrambling, we arrived at the top of the island, where we discovered a little cairn of rocks and, nearby, a path worn into the alpine tundra by the platter-size feet of a brown bear. There's scat to prove it. I looked across two miles to Bear Creek, where I knew the wild chum salmon were swimming upstream to spawn.

If the mining company gets its way, giant trucks loaded with ore will rumble down this valley. The mine would fall within the borders of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve—oddly possible because Contango Ore, the mining company, has development rights to a park inholdings owned by Cook Inlet Region Inc., one of 12 regional Alaska Native corporations. We fishermen sometimes hear the company helicopters slinging loads of cargo to the exploration site up in the mountains, flying from a giant vessel that shows up for a day or two, and then, except for the trash they leave behind, they're gone.

It's hard to know who ought to have final say over an idea like this in a place like this. Ultimately, someone will settle on what's to become of Tuxedni Bay and its quiet refuge. There is an Indigenous authority that exists independent of what any state or federal government says, and indeed, the Chickaloon Native Village, a sovereign Native nation, recently passed a resolution for the protection of Tuxedni Bay in Tikahtnu (Cook Inlet). The tribe resolves to "work to protect Tikahtnu traditional territory and all its fish and wildlife from the harmful ecological impacts of the Johnson Tract mine, haul road, and port."

The Chickaloon Native Village also wants the interior secretary, who oversees public lands, including national parks, to seek alternatives to developing this gold mine. The secretary does have a lot of say in the matter. Through an act of Congress known as the 1976 Cook Inlet Land Exchange, the National Park Service—entrusted with the care of our national parks—now finds itself preparing the way for this mine. One decision point is -- *continued p 6*

# BLM issues Central Yukon Resource Management Plan

## State and resource exploitation organizations attack

On November 12, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued the Record of Decision for the Central Yukon Resource Management Plan (RMP), updating management for nearly 13.3 million acres of public lands in central and northern Alaska. This plan covers management of portions of the central Yukon River watershed and the Dalton Highway utility corridor. According to the BLM, "the new RMP is the product of more than a decade of discussion and input from Tribes, cooperating agencies, and other stakeholders. It emphasizes important habitats for fish and wildlife species and other subsistence resources vital to rural Alaskans, including Alaska Native communities."

The State, Alaska Miners Association, Doyon Limited [Native] regional corporation, and the Arctic Slope [Native] Regional Corporation have protested the BLM's Central Yukon Resource Management Plan (Plan) before the Board of Land Appeals within the Interior Department.

About 48 percent (6.4 million acres) of the 13.3 million-acre plan area consists of areas of critical environmental concern and protected wildlife habitat and recreation areas, although it lacks wilderness and wild nd scenic river recommendations. The Plan:

- Designates approximately 3.6 million acres of

areas of critical environmental concern, 746,000 acres as caribou core habitat areas for two non-migratory herds, and 4,600 acres as Dall as sheep habitat areas; and

- Along the Dalton Highway corridor are two new back country conservation areas (666,000 acres), and three special recreation management areas (1,453,000 acres);

One of the most important provisions of the Plan disallows state selection of Dalton Highway corridor lands, especially the stretch through the Brooks Range to the North Slope. Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve abuts the west side of the corridor, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is adjacent to most corridor land on the east side. All other plan alternatives opened the corridor to allow state selections. State ownership would likely involve land disposals, mining and mineral leasing, and other commercial uses. While continued BLM management is essential, permanent protection for this highly scenic, wildlife, and recreational area will require congressional action.

The Board of Land Appeals, which consists of eight administrative judges, evaluated the protesters' claims and denied all four. The protesters can appeal the Board's decision in federal district court in Alaska. ❖

-- Jack Hession

## Tuxedni Bay -- from p. 5

happening now. After all this, the National Park Service appears to be rushing an administrative process to provide an access easement for a haul road that would begin in the Johnson River headwaters, run through the Bear Creek Valley, and connect to an industrial port planned for Tuxedni Bay's wild shore.

The National Park Service had signaled some semblance of public input on this matter. A comment period for the public, proposed for not a standard 90 or even 30 days but just 14 days, was scheduled for this fall. Yet now, the National Park Service appears to have canceled it entirely, closing the door on an opportunity for the American public to weigh in on the future of Tuxedni Bay. This means the Interior secretary needs to hear a message from all of us, and urgently: The federal government needs to find a way to defend Lake Clark National Park and Preserve by finding an alternative to mining for gold in this national treasure.

We can't allow a hell-bent push to allow mining in a place like this. Why bring in the noise and destruction of blasting in a place that knows no such thing? Who wants earth-rattling heavy equipment to replace brown bears? The diesel rumbling of incessant barge traffic is like nothing that's ever visited these waters. Scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration describe Tuxedni Bay as "among the quietest and

most pristine soundscapes" in Alaska's vast Cook Inlet. In these silty waters, beluga mothers and calves rely not on what they can see but on what they hear. Their sophisticated repertoire of clicks and calls, essentially language, helps them remain close together and find their way.

For working fishing families like mine, who know and love this place, we see what could be lost. This is where we come together to help one another and make a living. It's a way of life built to endure through the highs and lows of the fishing season, and we know this can't go on in a place handed over to extraction, to taking something until it's gone. We know what it is to take from Earth's abundance, and we honor the balance needed for it to remain.

Ours is a first-generation fishing family, but already, our young deckhand sons, 11 and 14, haven't known a summer without working the tides. On our boat, when it's time to pull in the nets, I'll sometimes ask them to hit the hydraulics lever, but we're all in on the joke: There's no hydraulic power on this skiff. We know the heavy lifting is up to us.

So when we pull hard on the net, a heavy load of wild sockeyes tumbles in easy. This fishing skiff may have been built to take a big load, but it can't contain the glee of these deckhands. As far as I can tell, they're simply thrilled to be alive. The boys toss fish on ice and tally them up in wild shouts. Their voices get swallowed up by Tuxedni's big quiet, and, for now, there is nothing to drown out the sound. ❖

(Dustin Solberg is a writer, editor, and commercial fisherman in Alaska.)



## A note to our Alaska members for the new year

Dear Chapter members:

I know that many of our members are scared about what another Trump term could mean for Alaska. It might not always be easy to protect our abundant wildernesses and the people that rely on them, but I can promise you one thing: we won't make it easy for those who are trying to harm our lands and waters either. We have been here before. We won several battles under the first Trump administration, and we can do it again.

There is reason for hope. The electoral results at the state and local levels give us opportunities to pass legislation that would add to our clean energy capabilities and materially improve the lives of Alaskans. Getting involved at the local level is one of the most effective ways to accomplish these goals.

The Sierra Club Alaska Chapter will keep on advocating for land protection, thriving communities, clean air, clean water, and a sustainable economy built on renewable energy. We hope you'll be there with us. ❖  
All the best,

-- Andrea Feniger

## Help us organize for better transit options in Alaska!

### Special Event December 17

We have an amazing citizen action group organizing for commuter rail in Alaska. Rail is greener, safer, and more accessible than car travel. Plus, we already have the infrastructure with the existing Alaska railroad. You can learn more about this work at <https://commuterrailak.com/>.

If you live in Anchorage or the Mat-Su, you can join this upcoming event to talk about how you can help move our commuter rail campaign forward. ❖

### Tuesday, December 17:

Black Birch Books in Wasilla @ 5:30pm

### Commuter Rail YES

Event Link: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1FJGFGbWqW/>



photo: Andrea Feniger

Cynthia Wentworth and Andrea Feniger team up to promote commuter rail whenever possible

Nature beckons! Get Outside



## Alaska Chapter Winter Party

Connect with your conservation community at our annual holiday party on Dec. 20!

We will host our annual holiday party on December 20th from 6-8 pm in downtown Anchorage at the Akela Space! We will have refreshments, items for auction, and time to mingle and learn about the work Sierra Club has done in 2024. Families are welcome!

➔ Please RSVP at the link below.

<https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaign>



## Volunteer with Sierra Club Alaska Chapter!

We always welcome volunteers with varied interests and time availability! We can plug you into a campaign you care about or build a working group around an issue that matters to you. We would love to connect with you directly and discuss how to best get you involved.

We have a couple of open positions on our Chapter Executive Committee. Consider running and help shape the direction of Sierra Club Alaska Chapter!

Email [alaska.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:alaska.chapter@sierraclub.org) with questions/interest or sign up at the link below and our team will be in touch. ❖



<https://act.sierraclub.org/actions/Alaska?actionId=AR0301659>

## Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

Sierra Club Alaska: P.O. Box 230323  
Anchorage, AK 88523-0323  
alaska.chapter@sierraclub.org

CHAPTER DIRECTOR  
Andrea Feniger  
andrea.feniger@sierraclub.org  
OFFICE:  
308 G Street  
Anchorage 99501

### Chapter Directory

#### Executive Committee:

CHAIR: Adrienne Canino, adrienne.canino@gmail.com  
CONSERVATION CHAIR: Susan Hansen, skhansen@ak.net  
TREASURER: Dick Anderson: 4fjord4@gmail.com  
LEGAL CHAIR and COUNCIL DELEGATE: Greg Stewart,  
4sierragreg@gmail.com  
COMPLIANCE CHAIR: Kim Kirby, kimandedo@yahoo.com  
AT LARGE: Santa Claus: santaclaus@usa.net

#### Other officers:

SECRETARY: Heather Jesse: heather.g.jesse@gmail.com  
Newsletter editor: Vicky Hoover, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org

#### Alaska Field Office:

Dan Ritzman, Alaska Program Director, 206-378-0114,  
dan.ritzman@sierraclub.org  
Mike Scott, Our Wild America campaign rep., 406-839-3333,  
mike.scott@sierraclub.org  
Sierra Borealis: <https://www.sierraclub.org/alaska/newsletters>



#### Follow Sierra Club's Alaska Chapter

For the latest on hikes and all tevents, check us out on Facebook or [www.sierraclub.com/alaska](http://www.sierraclub.com/alaska).

## Arctic bird in trouble: American golden plover

How frequently do ALASKANS see the American golden plover (*Pluvialis dominica*)?

Swift and graceful in flight, this is probably one of the fastest fliers among shorebirds, and with good reason: it migrates every year from Arctic Alaska and Canada to southern South America. In its amazing annual journey, the American golden-plover flies up to 20,000 miles each year as it migrates, following a circular route from breeding grounds on the Arctic tundra



of northern Canada and Alaska to the grasslands of southern South America and back again. This astounding migration—one of the longest known-- includes a non-stop flight of 3,000 to 3,500 miles over the Atlantic Ocean as these

birds move southward in the fall. That stretch alone is a distance greater than the span of the United States, coast to coast.

While migrating, the American golden-plover forms large, noisy flocks. In the spring, groups make frequent pit stops to rest and refuel in a variety of habitats, including native prairies, farm fields, and beaches. Flocks of northbound migrants, in their striking spring plumage, are seen mostly in the heartland of our continent, on the Great Plains and the Mississippi Valley.

The plover's normal habitat is prairies, mudflats, shorelines, and estuaries, tundra (summer). During migration, it is usually found on short-grass prairies, flooded pastures, plowed fields; less often on beaches, shores. It breeds on Arctic tundra in Alaska and northern Canada ([Baffin Island](#) west to [Yukon](#) and northernmost [British Columbia](#)). In western Alaska, where it overlaps with Pacific golden-plover, the American tends to nest at higher elevations, on more open, barren tundra.

An estimated 200,000 birds now exist, but the population trend is nosing downward. Huge numbers were shot in late 19th century, and population apparently has never recovered to historic levels. Loss of habitat on South American winter range is now a concern.

About the size of a robin, 9-11 inches (23-28 cm), this plover is slimmer than the black-bellied plover, with a smaller bill.

The American golden-plover shares its Arctic breeding grounds with many other migratory shorebirds, including the red knot, sanderling, and dunlin. At its breeding grounds, it is very territorial, displaying aggressively to neighbours. Like the mountain plover and buff-breasted sandpiper, the American golden-plover prefers grasslands to shorelines, and is often found far from water. ❖

(from Audubon and American Bird Conservancy, and from Wikipedia ) <https://act.abcbirds.org/>; <https://www.audubon.org/>