

SHOREBIRD OUTREACH UPDATES

Callie Gesmundo, USFWS Migratory Birds
Alaska Shorebird Group 2025



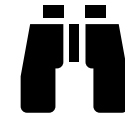
AK 3BB Committee



AK Bird Signs



ANC Bike to Work Day

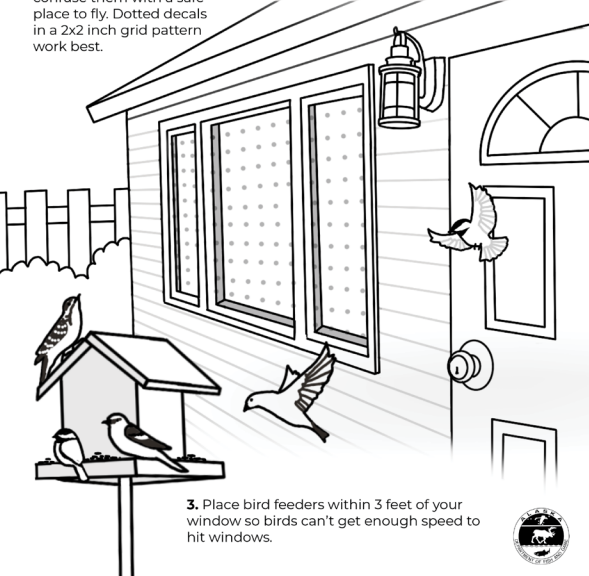


World Migratory Bird Day

Prevent birds from hitting your window

Birds that see reflections of trees and plants in glass windows often try to fly into them and are hurt or killed. These collisions kill some 1 billion birds every year in North America. **What can we do to help?**

1. Put barriers on your windows so birds don't confuse them with a safe place to fly. Dotted decals in a 2x2 inch grid pattern work best.
2. Turn off lights or draw curtains at night to not confuse and endanger migrating birds!



3. Place bird feeders within 3 feet of your window so birds can't get enough speed to hit windows.

BIRDS OF EARECKSON AIR STATION

Aleutian Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii leucopareia*

When and Where?

The Aleutian Cackling Goose is Shermay's summer goose and can be found here from March through October. Peak numbers occur in May and September when birds are migrating. On clear sunny days in May and September, look for Aleutian Cackling Geese migrating in flocks of hundreds of birds over the island.



Look Familiar?
Smaller and darker than the familiar Canada Goose, the Aleutian Cackling Goose has a black head and neck with a bold white neck ring. It's one of several subspecies of the Cackling Goose, which was once grouped with the Canada Goose but is now recognized as its own species.

Migration
Aleutian Cackling Geese breed in the Aleutian Islands and then migrate across the North Pacific Ocean to wintering grounds in California and Oregon.

Almost Extinct

After the introduction of Arctic Fox to the Aleutians by Russian fur trappers in the 1800s, the population of Aleutian Cackling Geese plummeted to the brink of extinction. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Aleutian Cackling Goose as endangered in 1967 and began removing the invasive foxes from the Aleutian Islands and transplanting captive reared geese to fox-free islands. These actions resulted in the population rebounding and the Aleutian Cackling Goose was removed from the Endangered Species List in 2001. These conservation measures resulted in one of the greatest conservation success stories of the 20th century.

When and Where?

The Emperor Goose is Shermay's winter goose. It can be found in the rocky intertidal areas around the island from October through April, with most birds present November through March. The Emperor Goose spends its entire life in remote areas around the Bering Sea, and because of this, few people are lucky to see this species.



Emperor Goose *Anser canagicus*

Migration

The Emperor Goose nests in coastal areas of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Seward Peninsula, and Northeast Russia. It spends its winters in the harsh intertidal areas of the Aleutian Islands, Alaska (Peninsula, and Kodiak Island).

Easy to Identify

You can identify adult Emperor Geese by their striking white head and hind-neck and bright orange legs. In the summer, their white head becomes stained orange from foraging in two-tide rich ponds on their breeding grounds. Juvenile Emperor Geese have speckled gray heads and less vibrant orange feet. Juveniles gradually replace their gray head and head feathers during their first winter until they are nearly all white for their first northbound migration back to their breeding grounds.



ALASKA 3BB COMMITTEE

Alaska Shorebird Group
2025 Annual Meeting

Toolkit

Make your Space Safe for Birds	Hunt, Fish, and Recreate Responsibly
Avoid disturbance during the nesting season	Choose Non-toxic fishing tackle
Reduce lawn, plant native plants	Properly dispose of fishing line
Keep bird feeders safe and clean	Pick up litter and marine debris
Make windows safe for birds	Choose non-toxic hunting ammunition
Turn off or dim lights at night	Stop the spread of invasive species
Keep birds safe from cats	Do not feed waterfowl, gulls, or ravens
Leave the leaves	Leash dogs while on walks and hikes
Avoid pesticides	
Prevent Collisions	Consumer Choices
Make windows safe for birds	Choose Bird-Friendly Coffee
Turn off or dim lights at night	Choose Bird-Friendly Chocolate
Make powerlines safe for birds	Choose Bird-Friendly Maple Syrup
Make towers safe for birds	Reduce reliance on single-use plastics
Make offshore structures and vessels safe for birds	Choose non-toxic ammo and tackle
Keep Birds Safe from Domestic Pets and Invasive Species	Citizen Science for Birds
Keep birds safe from cats	Report bird sightings using eBird
Leash dogs while on walks and hikes	Participate in a citizen science program
Stop the spread of invasive species	Report sick or dead birds
Read Me ▾ Master ▾ Preventing Collisions ▾ Home, Outdoor Spaces ▾ 1 Cats, Dogs, Invasives ▾ Fishing, Hunting, Recreating ▾ Consumer Choices ▾ Citizen Science ▾	

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Toolkit

Predation and Disturbance by Domestic Pets and Invasive Species

Domestic pets and invasive species negatively impact billions of birds each year through predation, disturbance, and displacement from native habitats.

Action	Result	Messages	Resources
Leash dogs	Reduce bird disturbance from off-leash dogs	Free roaming dogs have the potential to disturb ground nesting birds or roosting birds and even cause injury or mortality if caught.	Why Leashing Dogs Is an Easy Way to Protect Birds and Their Chicks Audubon
		Birds chased or flushed burn up crucial energy stores and experience high stress which can result in the depletion of critical calories needed for migration and during flights.	Bird Friendly Beaches Have Dogs On Leashes
		Flushed birds also leave their eggs and chicks vulnerable to predation by other animals.	Cats and Dogs and Birds at the Beach: A Deadly Combination
		To reduce the disturbance from your dog, keep it on leash unless in a designated off-leash, dog area.	

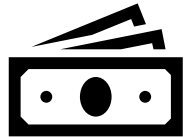
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Publication/Campaign



Nicole Michel (Audubon) working on AK analysis



ADF&G supporting her efforts



ABOG AK 3BB committee working on coordinated campaign

ALASKA BIRD SIGNS PROJECT

(Formally Alaska/Anchorage Birding Trail)

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WETLAND WANDERER

LESSER YELLOWLEGS OF BASHER BOG

BOREAL BIRTHPLACE
Lesser Yellowlegs make their summer home in the forest-tundra habitats across Canada and Alaska, including wetlands around Anchorage like Basher Bog. Wetlands throughout southcentral Alaska provide important habitat for this species to nest and raise chicks. The chicks, feathered and walking within hours of hatching, learn to fly in just 22 days! Once flighted, the chicks become independent from their parents and migrate later, without parental guidance along the way.

EPIC MIGRATIONS
These feathered ambassadors leave Alaska in late summer and travel south to their wintering grounds, stopping periodically before reaching the southern United States, Mexico, Caribbean Islands, and South America. Local biologists discovered where Anchorage-breeding Lesser Yellowlegs stop during their migrations and where they spend the winter by attaching GPS transmitters to birds. Some birds will travel up to 16,500 miles annually! For a 15-year-old bird, that is the equivalent of flying to the moon!

CONSERVATION
The Lesser Yellowlegs is one of the fastest declining shorebirds in North America. They face many threats during their annual lifecycle including habitat loss, agrochemical pollution at migratory and wintering sites, unregulated hunting in some countries, and even our beloved pets. When visiting wetlands in and around Anchorage, you can help by keeping your dog on a leash. When at home, they also benefit from having your cat kept on a leash or indoors.

DID YOU KNOW?
Soon after Lesser Yellowlegs chicks hatch, their parents take them on a journey to seek out freshwater ponds that provide plentiful food. On this trek, the flightless chicks sometimes need to cross busy roads and encounter dangerous predators.

If you hear a bird calling repeatedly near you, you might be close to its nest or chick! Back away slowly and be careful where you step!

If a 737 series 800 commercial jet was traveling the same distance as a Lesser Yellowlegs migrates in a year, it would have to refuel 5 times using 37,000 gallons of fuel!

Look and listen for Lesser Yellowlegs perched on the tops of trees standing guard over their territories, nests, or young chicks.

THIS PANEL WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES:

THE COMMON GOLDENEYE PROJECT

A Collaboration Benefitting Birds and People

FLIGHT TO THE INTERIOR
The Common Goldeneye is a medium-sized sea duck that breeds worldwide in boreal forests. They nest in natural tree cavities, but hens will also use artificial nest boxes. These boxes allow scientists to study them during breeding and help better manage the species.

In 1997, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers installed Common Goldeneye nest boxes on the Chena River Flood Control Project. Nest boxes are monitored each summer to track how many are used, the date nests are started, if nests survive, and if hens and ducklings return to the area each year.

BRACE FOR IMPACT
Within 24 hours of hatching, a hen will fly repeatedly to the nest entrance hole, eventually sitting or swimming below the cavity and calling. Ducklings jump from their natural cavity or nest box one after another to the ground, bouncing off vegetation, and quickly follow the hen to nearby water.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT
Besides a better understanding about Common Goldeneye nesting and population ecology, this study provides students with training and field experience.

Many who have worked on this project are now professionals working in universities, federal and state agencies, and national and international migratory bird and wetland conservation organizations.

Did You Know?
Common Goldeneye hens often use the same nest box each year. One hen came back to the same box and successfully hatched ducklings every year for over 10 years!

Ruffleheads, Common Mergansers, Boreal Owls, and Red Squirrels also benefit by using Common Goldeneye nest boxes.

In flight, Common Goldeneye wings make a distinct whistling sound. Listen by scanning below!

Scan to see a hen with her ducklings!

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Bigger in Alaska
The subspecies of Song Sparrow that occurs in the outer Aleutians, the Giant Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia maxima*, is unique in its size and habits. The Giant Song Sparrow is the largest of all subspecies and is over 60% larger than most subspecies found in the Lower 48.

BIRDS OF EARECKSON AIR STATION

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*

When and Where?
Lapland Longspurs are the most common breeding bird on Shemya Island and it's estimated that around 500 pairs breed on the island each year. You can often see males in summer performing their territorial flight display where they fly up in the air and slowly glide back to the ground while singing a complex series of jumbled notes.

What's in a Name
The Lapland Longspur gets its name from the Lapland Region of Scandinavia, where it was first discovered, and its unusually long claw on its hind toe.

Plumage Differences
During the summer, male Lapland Longspurs sport a striking look with a black head and throat and reddish rump of the neck. While females have a more subdued brown and streaked appearance, with less contrast than the males. In the fall, both sexes replace their feathers into a less vibrant, light brownish winter plumage.

Migration
Most populations of Snow Bunting are highly migratory, flying long distances south to their winter areas. However, buntings are present year-round in the Aleutians. Large flocks are found on Shemya in the winter, seen mostly along road edges and sandy beaches. Snow Buntings that breed on the adjacent, mountainous islands of Agattu and Atka likely join up with Shemya's buntings in the winter.

When and Where?
Snow Buntings are found in polar regions worldwide. They nest in rocky crevices and fissures in boulder fields. Where human structures are present, they will use artificial crevices like pipes, barrels, and construction rubble. On Shemya, Snow Buntings utilize both natural and artificial nesting habitat.

Unique Plumage Changes
Most birds change between breeding and winter plumages by dropping old feathers and growing new ones, also known as molting. However, male Snow Buntings use an additional technique: feather abrasion. Males will rub their bellies and heads in the snow, wearing down their brown, winter feathers, revealing bright white feathers below.

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia maxima*

When and Where?
Song Sparrows are common throughout North America, with the Near Islands representing the westernmost point of its range. This species lives on Shemya year-round and can be found hopping around rocky beaches in the intertidal zone.

Unique Threats
With its whole life dependent on the intertidal zone, this subspecies is at risk to catastrophic local events, particularly oil and fuel spills—unique among Alaskan songbirds.

Bigger in Alaska
The subspecies of Peregrine Falcon found in the Aleutians, Peleli, breeds from the Alaskan Peninsula to Russia's Commander Islands and south along the British Columbia coastline. Its maritime nature exposes this subspecies to a host of unique threats, particularly the loss of prey to oil spills, industry pollutants, and introduced predators like rats.

BIRDS OF EARECKSON AIR STATION

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus*

When and Where?
Snowy Owls can be found in the interior of the island or around the airfield. They are usually seen sitting on prominent grassy mounds or on various airfield light fixtures. The best time to find Snowy Owls on Shemya is during the winter, but a few may linger into spring, and some arrive early in fall.

Wayward Wanderers
It's not uncommon to see Snowy Owls outside their normal winter range. Snowy Owls are considered nomadic and irruptive migrants and can appear almost anywhere, sometimes in large numbers during events called "irruptions".

Irruptions
Irruptions are large migrations where birds show up outside their normal winter range. Once thought to be caused by hungry birds in search of food, we now know it's better explained by a baby boom the previous summer causing more owls to move south. A Snowy Owl was once found as far south as Bermuda during a previous irruption!

Plumage Differences
General patterns exist in Snowy Owl plumage by age and sex. As snowy owls age, they become increasingly white and lose the black barring common on younger birds. Also, males are generally whiter than females, so the darkest and most heavily barred birds are usually young females, while the almost completely white birds are adult males. Young males and adult females fall between these two extremes.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

When and Where?
Though Peregrine Falcons do not breed on Shemya Island, they can be found here year-round. Most birds that show up on the island are wandering juveniles. The best places on Shemya to spot this iconic falcon are near the rocky cliffs and bluffs near North Beach Road and the towers and approach lights near the airfield.

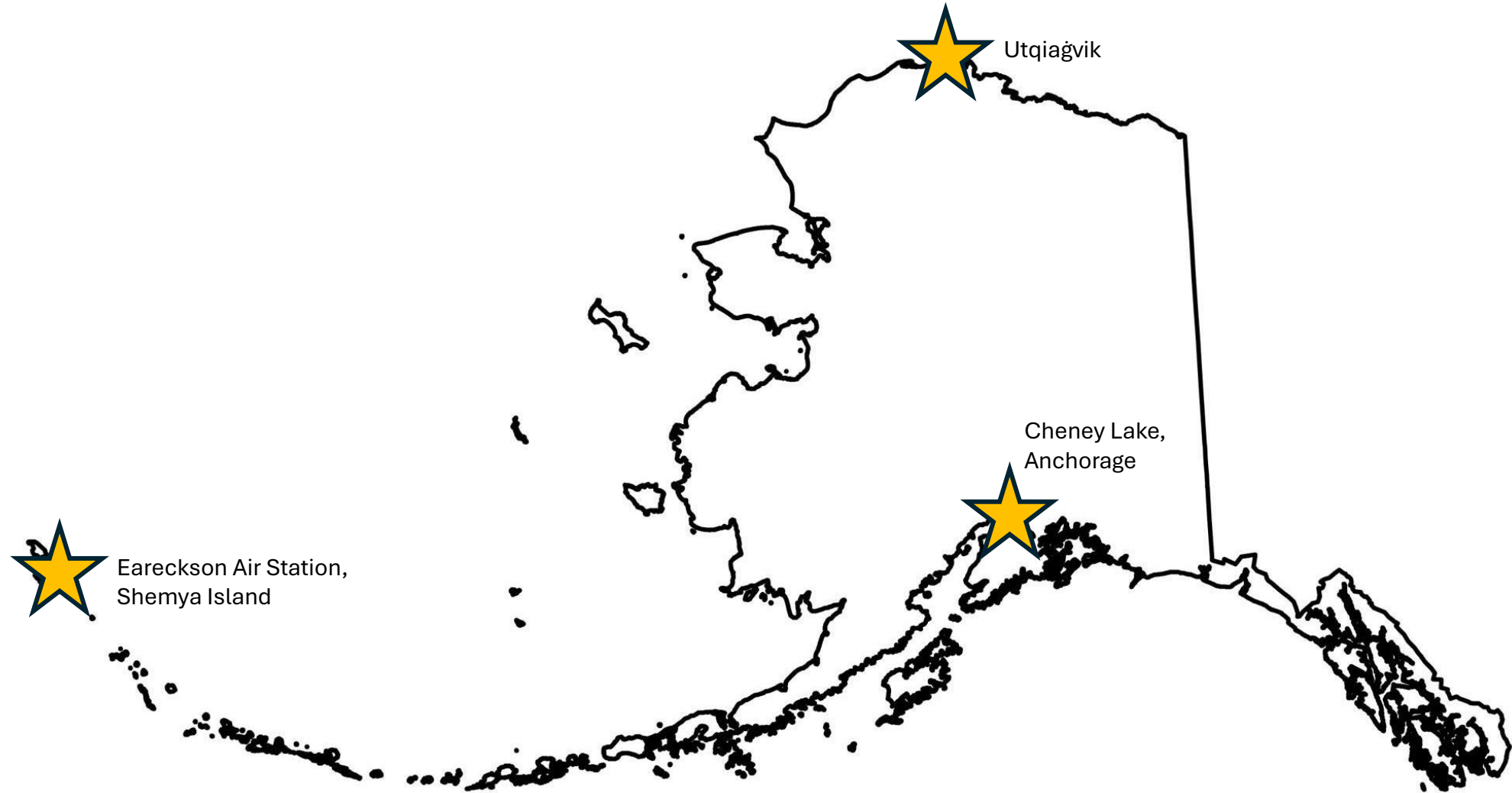
Plumage Differences
Juveniles are identified from adults based on plumage. Young Aleutian birds look different from other subspecies, with black streaking on their undersides, a dark head, and iridescent moustache. Adults are paler with horizontal barring on the breast and belly and a stark black head and defined moustache.

A Seafood Diet
Studies on the diet of Peregrine Falcons in the Aleutians found that most of their prey are seabirds—primarily auklets, murreslets, and storm-petrels. While this is not entirely surprising, given the abundance of seabirds that breed throughout the Aleutian Islands, the survival of these top predators is closely linked to the health of our marine environments. Protecting seabird feeding areas is key to also protecting this unique subspecies.

ALASKA BIRD SIGNS PROJECT

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2025 Annual Meeting

Future Signs



ANCHORAGE BIKE TO WORK DAY

Alaska Shorebird Group
2025 Annual Meeting





WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

USFWS Migratory Bird Program "Little Sits"

Alaska Shorebird Group
2025 Annual Meeting

