



Audubon

ALASKA

# Alaska Birding Trails & Festivals

**LAUREN CUSIMANO, COMMUNICATIONS  
MANAGER FOR AUDUBON ALASKA**



ALASKA

# About Audubon Alaska

**WE'VE BEEN HELPING TO CONSERVE  
THE SPECTACULAR NATURAL  
ECOSYSTEMS OF ALASKA FOR PEOPLE,  
BIRDS, AND WILDLIFE SINCE 1977.**



*Great Egret. Photo: Andrew McCullough/Audubon Photography Awards*



# Today, we'll talk about ...

- **ALASKA BIRDING TRAILS**
- **BIRD TOURISM IN ALASKA**
- **BIRD FESTIVALS IN ALASKA**

# Alaska Birding Trails

We just can't get enough ...



## Birding trails are ...

- ... virtual—though not always linear— guides to curated birding hotspots within a specific geographic region.
- Alaska has some in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and throughout Southeast Alaska.
- The Southeast Alaska Birding Trail includes the Chilkat Valley on Jilkáat Aani—known to birders as having the largest concentrations of Bald Eagles in the world.

## Trails are part of Audubon Alaska's Sustainable Development Lab

- This initiative is intentionally designed to create the time and space for proactive, creative thinking to help solve challenges for nature and people.
- For instance, the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail heavily highlights the Mendenhall Glacier and Wetlands in Juneau, which are sometimes under threat from development and other projects.





## Our work with birding trails

- We've been working on virtual and mobile guides offering maps that highlight key places across Alaska for birding.
- They provide information on the birding sites, including amenities and parking information.
- Plus, we will give you tips to make your trip safe, easy, and fun.

## Now introducing the Anchorage Birding Trail!

- We're working to bring the Anchorage Birding Trail into a digital, web-based, interactive platform for a spring 2026 launch.
- The trail details 35 sites across the Anchorage Bowl, ranging from Westchester Lagoon to Whittier and up to Arctic Valley.
- Sites are organized into three simplified habitat types: coastal, freshwater forest, and alpine.







## Coastal sites!

- These include the nearshore waters and intertidal zone of Cook Inlet and adjacent areas dominated by coastal influences
- Think Lower Ship Creek, Point Woronzof, Carr-Gottstein Park ...
- Arctic Tern, Trumpeter Swan, Sandhill Crane, Red-necked Grebe, Lesser Yellowlegs, and many other species

## Forest and freshwater sites!

- Think habitat between Cook Inlet and the Chugach Mountains
- Kincaid Park and Jewel Lake in Anchorage to the Eagle River Nature Center and the mossy Winner Creek Trail down in Girdwood
- Northern Goshawk, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Common Loon, and more





## Alpine sites!

- This is habitat found along the eastern edge of the Anchorage area in the Chugach Mountains.
- Arctic Valley, Prospect Heights, and Glen Alps
- Willow Ptarmigan, Horned Lark, and Rough-legged Hawk, and more

The background is a collage of several circular logos for the Alaska Birding Trail. Each logo features a stylized landscape with a sun, water, and birds, with the text 'ALASKA BIRDING TRAIL' and 'UTQIAĠVIK' around the perimeter. Interspersed among the logos are photographs of ducks, including a mallard duck and a tufted titmouse.

# ICYMI: The Utqiaġvik Birding Trail launched in 2025!



**UIC**  
SCIENCE



## Acknowledgements for the Utqiagvik Birding Trail

Multiple entities helped generate this guide to birding hotspots in this community, including:

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Iñisaġvik College
- Iñupiat Heritage Center
- North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management
- Tuzzy Consortium Library
- UIC Science
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service





## We'd also like to acknowledge ...

People and resources who assisted with the Iñupiat language in the material:

- Iñupiatun Uqaluit Taniktun Sivuniñit
- Official Website of the North Slope Borough
- Indigenous Knowledge Liaison Robin Mongoyak

Plus, fest organizers Lindsay Hermanns, Rick Lanctot, Aaron Yappert, Hunter Wells, and more!

## Coming soon ...

- We're also bringing the Utqiagvik Birding Trail online.
- The virtual Southeast Alaska Birding Trail is also getting a makeover for a more streamlined experience.
- And as part of the Audubon-wide website update, all trails will be found on a new, online hub.





## Other Alaska trails ...

- There are also birding trails in Fairbanks and on Kodiak Island, which are overseen by their respective chapters.

## But birding trails can also be economic drivers ...

- The Southeast Alaska Birding Trail was created to birding in Southeast Alaska accessible to everyone.
- BUT ALSO, the trail was designed to foster sustainable economic development built around the bioregion and to grow Alaska's economy through bird tourism.



# Alaska Bird Tourism

So hot right now ...

A group of birdwatchers on a boat in Alaska. In the foreground, a person wearing a blue knit hat and sunglasses is using a Nikon camera. Other people in the background are also using binoculars. The boat is on a body of water with mountains in the distance under a blue sky with some clouds.

## Bird tourism is big in Alaska

For instance, a study in 2022 demonstrated that more than 300,000 birdwatchers visited the state in 2016, spending \$378 million and supporting 4,000 jobs.



## More on bird tourism

Also in 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did a survey showing that 96 million people observed birds around their homes and on trips, and 42.6 million took trips away from home to observe wild birds.

## As seen in Alaska Business Magazine last spring...

“Birding is big business in Alaska because of the healthy, resilient public lands and waters of our state. These places offer a bunch of different habitat types and, as a result, allow for a rich diversity of bird species.”

—David Krause, Vice President of the Alaska Program of the National Audubon Society



# Alaska Bird Festivals

More than a good time ...



## Some recent work ...

Recognizing the importance of bird festivals in fostering regenerative tourism, Audubon Alaska works annually with communities and partners to aid, amplify, and attend bird festivals that uplift culture, education, and tourism throughout Alaska.

## So, in 2025 ...

Antero Communications, the consulting arm of the Alaska Outdoor Alliance (AOA), was commissioned to assess the current state of bird festivals across Alaska, identify key challenges and opportunities, and provide strategic recommendations for growth and sustainability.

Ten festivals, ranging from Utqiagvik to Ketchikan, participated in the project.





## To address these challenges, recommendations included ...

- Strengthen bird festivals as conservation tools through better marketing, partnerships, funding, and education-focused programming.
- Support remote and rural festivals by reducing travel barriers, highlighting place and culture, and offering virtual or hybrid options.
- Provide long-term support through Audubon Alaska with centralized marketing, training, mini-grants, and educational kits.



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Any  
questions?



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Lauren Cusimano

Communications Manager at Audubon Alaska

907-433-5300

[Lauren.Cusimano@Audubon.org](mailto:Lauren.Cusimano@Audubon.org)

