

Alaska Songbird Institute

Conserving Alaska's boreal birds through ecological education & research



2014 Year in Review

THANK YOU!

What a year! We are proud to report that, with your support, our primary projects operated at full capacity in 2014—collecting valuable scientific data throughout the migration and nesting seasons, while engaging thousands of people in ecological research, right here in Fairbanks! We worked with a diversity of people, from children and parents, to university students, early-career professionals, teachers, and lifelong learners. This year we also began slowly expanding our year-round presence through classroom programs, bird-themed art shows, and community events; and we continued to invest in developing a solid administrative structure for our new organization.

We believe our greatest capacity and resiliency can be achieved through strong and meaningful collaborative relationships. Many of our accomplishments in 2014 were achieved in partnership with other organizations, schools, universities, and government agencies. In the years ahead, we are excited and inspired to build these collaborations, and to continue our work in the field of public participation in scientific research—that is, our partnership with YOU! We aim to provide a continuum of experiences that allow people to jump into scientific research, and make valuable contributions to understanding ecology and conservation in our changing world.

We also continue to be incredibly grateful for our 80+ dedicated volunteers who generously give their time to everything from field research, to data analysis and presentation, to our advisory committees. We are also grateful for **YOU**—our growing base of financial supporters who together represent 15 states, 28 Alaska businesses, and households throughout Alaska—from Barrow to Nome, to Bethel, Anchorage, Homer, Juneau, and more! We look to you as partners in our work. Thank you for helping to conserve Alaska's birds!
—Tricia, April, Beth, Amy, Ed, Rebecca, & J.J.

SWALLOW ECOLOGY PROJECT

It's been an odd couple of years for Interior Alaska's birds—and ornithologists across the state are keen to understand the impacts of these highly variable conditions on bird survivorship and productivity. While 2013 brought late, record-breaking snow followed by temperatures topping 90° F, 2014 brought...

rain, rain, and more RAIN! Incessant precipitation that demanded we don hip waders to reach some of the nesting boxes at Creamer's Field. Unfortunately for aerial insectivores like swallows, it's tough to catch insects on the wing in the pouring rain. As one might expect, there was high mortality in chicks at our study sites this year, especially after day 10 when the chicks' caloric demand is at its peak. It was an odd year, to say the least. Both laying and fledging were longer and later than usual, and we even recorded two nests initiated in mid July—a time when most swallows have already begun their southward migration!

2014 marked the 16th consecutive year that students monitored the nesting ecology of swallows at Creamer's Field. Years like this, along with the ongoing decline of aerial insectivores at northern latitudes, continue to shed light on the conservation significance of this work. We are so grateful for our 18 students (ages 10-17) who, along with recent UAF graduate Eri Nakanishi, volunteered 525 soggy and smiling field hours to this study. More than half of our students were returning for their second or third season, and with their help we monitored 68 nests at Creamer's Field and the University of Alaska campus. These young ornithologists have shown remarkable skill and dedication to their work! Here's what they accomplished:

(Please see Swallow Ecology Project, continued on page 3)



ASI volunteer & bird catcher extraordinaire, Ali Magelky, holds a male Tree Swallow banded at the nest box she monitored in her school garden at The Watershed School.

Staff:

Danielle Aube, Bander
Tricia Blake, Director
April Harding Scurr,
Science Director
Anna Maguire, Educator

Board of Directors:

Beth Peluso, President
Amy Turner, Treasurer
Tricia Blake & April Harding Scurr, Co-secretaries
Gerald "J.J." Frost
Ed Murphy
Rebecca Young



CREAMER'S FIELD MIGRATION STATION

Volunteers, birds, and...RAIN, oh my!

By April Harding Scurr, Science Director

Recently someone asked me how I keep my volunteers coming back year after year. I stopped and thought for a moment, then realized that maybe I didn't know the answer to that question. The Creamer's Field Migration Station has been around a long time. Twenty-three years to be exact. During that time, managers, biologists, interns, and even the "owners" of the station have changed. Yet, year after year, the volunteers come back. Some stay a year or two, but most return for five, six, seven seasons, or more. Some have been there all 23 years! So again the question arises, "Why do they come back?" Is it because we biologists have such incredible people skills? Maybe it's the lure of holding a wild bird in your hand? The camaraderie? The opportunity to share your passion with kindred spirits? To teach someone about songbird migration? Maybe it's the donuts? Or maybe it's just fun?

Over the course of 23 years the Creamer's Field Migration Station has captured over 106,000 birds of 80 species! We have taught tens of thousands of people of all ages about migratory birds through school field trips, mentoring, internship, and volunteer opportunities. Our doors are always open to the general public, and thousands of visitors to Creamer's Refuge have dropped in. Dozens of interns have come through the station to jumpstart their biological, conservation, or wildlife management careers. Nine professional publications and numerous articles in public literature have been written using the station's data.

So how did 2014 compare? We were open for both spring and fall migration. We captured 1,945 birds—pretty impressive considering eight of our best nets could not be opened due to high water levels this fall. (We had to wear chest waders all season!) We banded 1,793 new birds, and had 146 recaptures, comprised of 84 separate individuals. We had two remarkable non-songbird captures this year. We banded a juvenile, female, Sharp-shinned Hawk on September 3; she was recovered on November 10 in Alberta. Our second noteworthy capture was a Northern Goshawk, only the second one ever captured at the station. These large aerial predators of the forest usually bounce out of mist nets, or just fly right on through. Fortunately for us, this young, inexperienced male flew right in and waited for us. What a treat!

Eighty-six school classes visited the station this year, for a total of 2,187 people. We also had over 185 visitors stop by and learn about migration. Continuing with our educational mission, we had two apprentices this year—Barbara Logan, a long-time Fairbanks resident, and Eri Nakanishi, a recent UAF graduate. Barbara's enthusiasm for all aspects of the project made her a joy to have at the station. She has volunteered for several years and so picked up banding quickly and became an invaluable member of the team. She is always eager to teach new volunteers and speak to the public about our research. Eri recently graduated with a B.S. from the Biology and Wildlife department here at UAF. She contacted us to see if she could volunteer at least half time. So we took her on as an apprentice instead. She is hands down fantastic. Thanks Eri and Barb for all your hard work!

Danielle Aube, bander extraordinaire, was key to our success this year as well. She single handedly ran the station this fall—her five-foot frame charging fearlessly through the water in chest waders to extract birds, then banding them by the hundreds. Thanks Danielle! We hope to see you back some day.

This year we held an intensive three-day volunteer training session, bringing together new and experienced volunteers to share ideas, opinions, tips, and strategies about how to run the station. I felt it was a huge success and I even picked up a few tricks myself. In total our 42 amazing volunteers contributed at least 1,828 hours in the field this year. A huge thank you goes out to all of them!

And so I return to my original question. What keeps bringing the volunteers back? I asked them. They replied, "the people you meet and work with," "doing something good in this world," helping the birds," and of course, "the donuts."

Thank you to all our volunteers, Adopt-a-net sponsors, and to Kathleen Neumaier for housing our fall bander. You all made our 2014 season a success. See you in the spring!

Photos left to right: A student in the USFWS Student Conservation Corps releases a banded thrush; an immature Sharp-shinned Hawk (Note the light eye color!); Fall bird bander Danielle Aube with a Gray Jay; A student from Joy Elementary School releases a banded Black-capped Chickadee during her class' visit to CFMS.

PREAPRES

One of our most exciting new educational endeavors is PREAPRES (Preparing Responsive Educators using Place-based Authentic Research in Earth Systems), a science curriculum for indigenous students and teachers administered by Alaska Pacific University and funded by the National Science Foundation. The project is building community-relevant, culturally-responsive, place-based curricula for indigenous students in Alaska and Hawaii. Lessons connect current, place-based, climate research with traditional knowledge, while expanding, implementing, and conducting research on a framework for providing indigenous students with the skills and knowledge needed for success in STEM (science, technology, engineering & mathematics) careers. We are thrilled to be a part of this unique and innovative project. ASI's Alaska bird lessons will begin debuting in Western Alaska schools in early 2015.

(Swallow Ecology Project, continued from p. 1)

- Monitored the chronology and success of 68 nests at Creamer's Refuge and on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus
- Banded 255 swallows
- Collected over 60 fecal samples, retrieved **four** geolocators, and contributed data to three collaborative studies through the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; University of Guelph, Ontario; and Cornell University (*Golondrinas de las Americas*). The "geos" used a light sensor to track each bird's migratory route and wintering location throughout the year. **We are excited to share our results with you in 2015!**



2015 Calendar of Events

Feb 28: *Songbird Soirée!* ASI's new winter fundraiser. 4:30 PM at the Palace Theatre in Pioneer Park.

March 7: Final day of 2014-15 *Fairbanks FeederCount*

March 15: Application deadline for Arctic Audubon's Small Grants (arcticaudubon.org/wordpress/small-grants)

April 6: Registration begins for spring field trips to Creamer's Field Migration Station (CFMS)

April 20: Opening day for spring banding at CFMS

April 15: Application deadline for ASI's high school internship program (aksongbird.org/education/high-school-internship.org)

April 27-May 19: Spring field trips to CFMS

May 1: Deadline to register for ASI's youth mentoring program (aksongbird.org/youth-mentoring)

May 15-June 1: *Bird-A-Thon* (aksongbird.org/donate/bird-a-thon)

Aug 3: Opening day for fall banding at CFMS

Aug 5, 12, 19, & 26: Free guided walks to CFMS. Meet at 10 AM at the Creamer's Farmhouse.

Aug 10: Registration opens for fall field trips to CFMS

Aug 20-Sept 25: Fall field trips to CFMS

Aug 28-30: Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival

Aug 30: *Bird Banding Breakfast* at CFMS

Nov 6: ASI's annual *Raven Art Show*. 5-8 PM at the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center

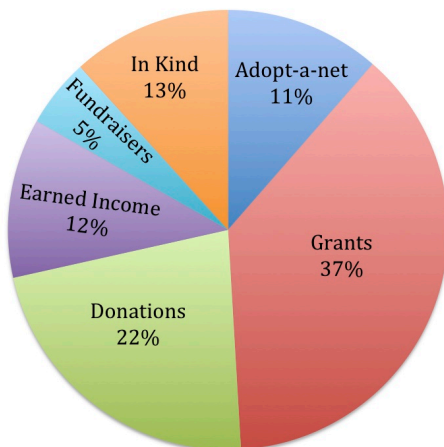
Nov 14: First count day of the 2015-16 *Fairbanks FeederCount*

Dec 12: Second count day of the 2015-16 *Fairbanks FeederCount*

For updates, please visit: www.aksongbird.org/education/events.

2014 Financial Review

Income

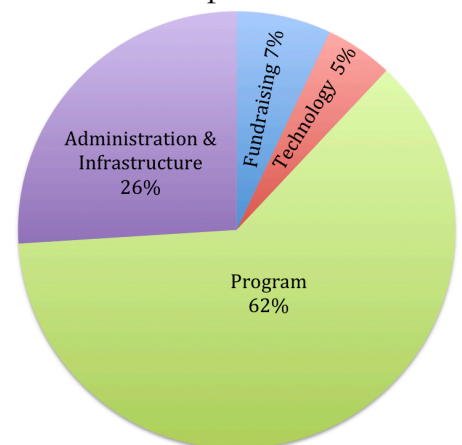


Thank you to these generous supporters of bird conservation & science education:

GRANTS: BP; ConocoPhillips Alaska; Flint Hills Resources; Skaggs Foundation; Norcross Foundation

ADOPT-A-NET SPONSORS: ABR, Inc.; Arctic Audubon Society; Camp Denali/North Face Lodge; Design Alaska; Laurel Devaney & Ken Russell; North Pole Physical Therapy; LGL Research Associates, Inc.; Barbara Logan; Randy Meyers; Sunrisers Rotary Club; Usibelli Foundation

Expenses



Become a member of the Alaska Songbird Institute by making a tax-deductible donation today!

Name: _____

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Donation Amount: \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other: _____

Please contact me about becoming a Frequent Flyer (a monthly sustaining donor)

Please contact me about joining an advisory committee or becoming a volunteer

Would you like to be added to our email list to receive program and volunteer updates? YES NO

May we recognize your donation publicly (in print and on the web)? YES NO



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