



2025 Year In Review

Conserving Alaska's boreal birds through ecological education & research

Dear Alaska Songbird Institute Community,

As the year 2025 draws to a close, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to you for being a friend to ASI. This year has been a challenging one for non-profit organizations throughout Alaska, and ASI is no exception. Resiliency has been a major theme for us this year and in this regard, I can think of no better an exemplar than the boreal birds that live and thrive, from our backyards, to the vast hinterlands of our home state. Thanks to the efforts of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters like you, we have been able to sustain longtime ASI programs and poise ourselves for the coming year. In this newsletter, please join me in reflecting and celebrating another successful year of ASI's programs amid the ever changing cycle of the subarctic seasons. For all of us who are fascinated, brightened, and inspired by Alaska's boreal birds, our lived experiences with the birds enrich our lives. At ASI, our core mission is all about cultivating such connections for people of all backgrounds and future generations. For me, several such encounters serve as "bookmarks" to another busy year. Spring migration featured an especially strong and diverse showing of Arctic-nesting shorebirds, to the delight of local birders participating in ASI's Fairbanks Birding Challenge. Spring migration featured some notable individual birds, including Fairbanks' second-ever Red-necked Stint, found at precisely the same spot at Tanana Lakes as the first in 2023. At the Creamer's Field Migration Station, our staff and volunteers retrieved some very special individual birds this year, including the oldest known Hammond's Flycatcher—more on her in the pages that follow! And at the Tree Swallow project, we welcomed another cohort of bright, highly motivated young interns who tracked the brief, but intense breeding season of our highly migratory Tree Swallows. Even as the world around us changes with the seasons and with the times, I take great pride and thanks in a few constants. Judging by our young interns, the future is indeed bright for continued learning, conservation, and knowledge exchange about our boreal birds. We also have a fantastic and dedicated staff and cadre of volunteers who make things happen in the field, and at ASI events. Finally, we have an engaged and multi-talented community that makes it all possible. With the time, energy, and knowledge of our volunteers, generous donors, and fantastic staff, ASI is doing great work that you can read about in the pages that follow. On behalf of all of us at ASI, THANK YOU for your support.

Best wishes this Holiday Season!

Gerald "J.J." Frost, President
ASI Board of Directors



Photos clockwise from top: A beautiful fall morning checking nets; Kyle, a youth volunteer, transports birds to the station; ASI traveled to Bethel and Juneau in June 2025 to train volunteers including Deja, an ANSEP student.

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2025 Creamer's Field Migration Station Update

By Robert Snowden, CFMS Director



This year was the 34th consecutive season of banding operations at the Creamer's Field Migration Station (CFMS). As the northernmost banding station in North America, and only long-

term monitoring operation of its kind in Interior Alaska, CFMS continues to be uniquely positioned to study songbird populations in the boreal forest. Conducting fieldwork in such a dynamic environment always presents its ups and downs, and 2025 was no exception. Overall, we saw generally lower bird activity in our nets this year, but there were nevertheless many exciting moments and observations to document.

Our spring numbers were fairly consistent with long-term averages. We had 194 total captures of 16 species. Redpolls were our most common bird (42 captures) after being almost entirely absent in 2024. This continues the species' trend of appearing at the station in large numbers in alternating years. We also saw a relatively productive spring for Swainson's Thrushes and American Robins.

In the fall, on the other hand, we were unable to catch birds in the numbers seen in past years. Our efforts were impacted by numerous rain events that cut short or cancelled many banding days, and several typically-productive nets were difficult to access due to high water levels in the flooded wetland area of CFMS. The 745 captures for the season were the fewest for a fall in station history, though with 30 species we still saw a nice bit of variety. Even with the low captures, the data we collected may provide a window into how dynamic environmental conditions in the fall influence local bird abundance and migration timing. And despite the challenges, there were plenty

of unique birds to appreciate. One big highlight was the station's first-ever Common Yellowthroat, a young male caught on August 21. These marsh-favoring warblers historically have not been found this far into the Alaskan interior, but with a warming climate and suitable wetland habitat in the area, there have been a few sightings around Fairbanks in recent summers. This fall's Yellowthroat may be a herald of what to expect in future years! We were also thrilled by a female American Kestrel captured on September 15—just the second CFMS record for the species—as well as an Arctic Warbler on August 12. This species breeds in the mountains and coastal areas of western Alaska, and is one of the continent's few songbirds that winters in Asia, rather than the Americas. We enjoyed seeing this visitor on the onset of its long migration journey!

Thank you to all the volunteers and donors that supported our efforts this year. We look forward to what 2026 brings at the banding station!

Photo top left: A visitor helps to release a banded Savannah Sparrow at CFMS. Photo below: Robert & our crew processing birds during a busy fall day. Photos by Antje Carlson Photography.



The majority of the migratory songbirds banded at our Creamer's Field Migration Station are never encountered again, but every season we recapture at least a few individuals first banded in prior years. These "returners" can help us better understand survival rates, site fidelity, and changes in body condition over time. Apart from scientific information, they often present compelling individual stories too! Among our favorite recurring recaptures in recent years is a particular female Hammond's Flycatcher. This small species—scarcely heavier than two nickels—fiercely defends small breeding territories in mature coniferous and mixed forests in the Western U.S., Canada, and Alaska, then overwinter in the mountains of Mexico and Central America. This particular female was first banded as an adult in May 2018, and has been recaptured once each spring in recent years. On May 12th this year, she showed up in our nets once again, making her at least 8 years old, and breaking the record for the oldest-known individual of her species! The previous record was held by a 7-year old bird banded in Oregon in the 1990s. Avian longevity records from across North America are maintained by the federal Bird Banding Laboratory. Beyond our excitement to witness this lifespan milestone, we can't help but marvel at this little bird's tenacious ability to navigate many thousands of perilous miles to return back to the same small patch of Fairbanks forest year after year. At a time when birds face so many challenges throughout their lives, this flycatcher is a true survivor that we can be inspired by. We hope to see her continue her story at the station next spring!



Building Connections Through Birds & Community

By Shelby Morgan, Education & Outreach Coordinator



Joining the Alaska Songbird Institute this year has been an incredible privilege. Although my background is in ecology and outdoor education, I came to ASI brand new to the world of birds. Working here has opened my eyes to the fascinating lives of these creatures and given me an intimate understanding of their world. I couldn't be more grateful for my work and this organization.

This year brought exciting new opportunities to develop programming and strengthen community partnerships. With support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Environmental Education Grant Program, we launched several collaborations with organizations including Calypso Farm & Ecology Center, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Bonanza Creek LTER (Long Term Ecological Research network). Through these partnerships, we shared our Swallow Ecology Project with new audiences and introduced many people to the wonder of Tree Swallows. In the fall, we built a place-based project with Effie Kokrine Charter School, extending our outreach into the school year.

Our partnership with the Boys and Girls Club was a major highlight. Students at the Fairbanks Clubhouse participated in a six-week program that included weekly bird lessons followed by visits to Creamer's Field to take part in the Swallow Ecology Project. This hands-on experience allowed them to connect classroom learning to real-world research. They collected data, observed behavior, and even held birds during the nesting season.

We partnered with Calypso Farm's Addie Willsrud, who led a nature journaling workshop for our cohort of high school interns. Six students learned to observe and interpret the natural world through art, discovering how much more they can notice when they slow down and stay present. Each intern left with new drawing skills and a journaling kit to continue exploring nature on their own. We hope that they will use this newfound knowledge and skillset to keep them grounded in both wonder and observation moving forward.

Our collaboration with the Bonanza Creek LTER included the Leaders in Training (LIT) program and the Science Adventure Camp. The LIT group joined us at Creamer's Field to shadow a day of fieldwork, then helped design bird-themed activities for younger campers. Later in the summer, we watched with pride as they led a bird identification game for the Adventure Camp students.

This fall, we launched an internship with Effie Kokrine Charter School, focusing on researching and creating educational signage about winter birds found on their campus. The students blended Indigenous knowledge and Western science to produce culturally relevant materials. With guidance from a local elder, the project aimed to honor both the ecological and cultural significance of local bird species.

This year has shown us just how powerful partnerships can be in connecting people to birds and conservation. As we look toward 2026, we remain hopeful, inspired, and committed to connecting with the Fairbanks community.



Photos from top to bottom: Shelby with an adult Tree Swallow at our study site on the UAF campus; Shelby and kids from the Fairbanks Boys & Girls Club check a nest box at Creamer's Field; ASI's first cohort of high school interns at Effie Kokrine Charter School, Breanna and Caleb, created posters for their school sharing Western and Indigenous Science information on four common birds found on their campus.



At right: An adult Tree Swallow perches on its nest box at Creamer's Field. For the fourth consecutive year, ASI's high school interns put QR codes on select boxes along trails at Creamer's Field. Trail users scan the QR codes to reach a website created and maintained by our students. The website uses words and photos to tell the story of each nest throughout the season. These codes are scanned by hundreds of trail users each season, helping to share our students' research with a broad audience while also increasing bird safety by discouraging people from disturbing the boxes.



Check it out! www.sites.google.com/aksongbird.org/creamersfieldnestboxes

North for Science! 2025 Expedition Report



By Carol Scott, North for Science Founder & Program Coordinator

Despite a cold, wet arctic storm that delayed our departure, ten adventurous Interior Alaska middle school students from diverse backgrounds spent seven June days camping and learning together along the Dalton Highway in the Brooks Range on this year's *North for Science!* expedition. As the road to the Galbraith Lake Campground was blocked by an impassable snowdrift, we spent all six nights at Marion Creek campground near Coldfoot this year. Despite setting up camp in the rain, not a complaint was heard and the group had immediate practice in staying warm and dry while living outdoors.

Rain gear and rubber boots served us well as we headed to the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center for hands-on activities: bear awareness training and deterrent practice, owl pellet dissection, gold panning instruction and collecting live vegetation plugs that stayed on display in the Visitor Center all season. Under unexpectedly blue skies that continued for the rest of the trip, we hiked to Marion Creek Falls. Along the way we learned about managing human impact on vegetation by helping to move materials for future boardwalk construction. We also met up with a multi-disciplinary EvoME (Evolving Meta-Ecosystems) research team at Grayling Lake, where researchers helped us examine terrestrial and aquatic insects, and demonstrated how to get grayling to regurgitate their stomach contents. As in previous years, we conducted snowshoe hare pellet counts for a long-term agency study, then stopped for a brief tour of the community of Wiseman.

A day trip to the north side of the Brooks Range took us to Toolik Field Station, where we spent much of the day learning from staff and researchers about many ongoing Arctic research projects. We'd brought our camp kitchen along so were able to spend the evening eating, fossil hunting, and playing in the Galbraith Lake area. Those impassable snowdrifts provided ample ammunition for an awesome all-hands-on-deck snowball fight before we headed back south over Atigun Pass for our final night of camping at Marion Creek.

Throughout this fun-and-learning filled week team members were constantly active and engaged, enthusiastically soaking up every new experience and enjoying living outdoors regardless of weather conditions - with a new group of friends, all in awesome surroundings.

Here's what 2025 participants had to say about their experience in their own words:

"North for Science is a fun camp to make new friends, and to get out of your comfort zone. No matter the weather, we will ALWAYS have fun."

"I like the no electronics rule because it brings people together!"

"North for Science is a great program. It is an amazing experience...You get to learn cool things and meet great scientists."

Thank you to our partners at the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. This amazing program is not possible without you!



Photos top to bottom: Enjoying dinner at Galbraith Lake; Visiting the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot; Delilah practicing with inert bear spray

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By the
Numbers

88
nests
monitored by 27
youth & teens

70
classes
attended K-12
field trips

10
students
spent 7 days in the
Arctic on North for
Science!

1,556
birds
of 33 species
banded

3,014
hours
volunteered on
ASI field projects
(1,372 by kids!)

2,130
people
visited CFMS

At least
2,952
people
attended ASI
community
programs



Gratitude: 2025 Alaska Songbird Institute Supporters

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North Pole Coffee Roasting Company,
Metropolitan Garage, Black Gold Transport

A heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers, generous members, advisory committee members, and all who donate through Pick.Click.Give, the Fairbanks Co-op Market Lend A Hand Program, and other local giving programs.

Special thanks to our **Frequent Flyers!** These generous sustaining monthly donors provide a predictable and steady income that makes planning and budgeting easier and more strategic.

Like the birds we study, ASI's 2025 supporters hail from all across Alaska from Utqiagvik to Nome, Hooper Bay to Hoonah, and so many places in between. We are also honored to have support from across the U.S. You are a diverse group, united by your commitment to conserving Alaska's wild birds and their habitats.



The Power of Partnerships: From collaboration to co-creation

At ASI, we know the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Our work environment is highly collaborative—within our team and with our students, program partners, stakeholders, and broader community. These partnerships not only expand our capacity, but also bring valuable expertise, creativity, and innovation to our work. Through open dialogue and shared decision-making, our diverse partners strengthen our mission, allowing us to create programs that are more effective, resilient, and inclusive.

As 2025 draws to a close, we extend our profound gratitude to all of our partners whose unique perspectives, skills, and experiences contribute to ASI's mission.

ASI is just one of the organizations who call Creamer's Field home, and we are grateful for the support of our partners on the refuge. Stay tuned in 2026 for more information on our latest project together—Bank Swallow nesting habitat! We are also thankful for the



hospitality of the Northern AK Environmental Center where we share office and meeting space.

Photo at left: Refuge partners at a new Bank Swallow nest site at Creamer's Field

ASI traveled to Bethel and Juneau to train community volunteers and students as part of the Alaska Swallow Monitoring Network in 2025. Other Tree Swallow project research & education partners include:



North for Science! is an incredible immersive STEM program offered at no charge to participating students. This is possible because of the co-leadership, logistical support, and in-kind donations of gear, transportation, and food provided by the team.



ASI is also thrilled to partner with Effie Kokrine Charter School on a new internship program, local business ABR, Inc. on avian surveys, and the Bird Genoscape Project and the UAF Dept of Biology & Wildlife on projects at the Creamer's Field Migration Station.





ALASKA SONGBIRD INSTITUTE
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MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE: _____

ASI's mission is to conserve Alaska's boreal birds through ecological education and research. We are proud to continue the community-based science tradition started by the Alaska Bird Observatory on Creamer's Refuge three and a half decades ago. Together we are building rare and increasingly valuable datasets on Alaska boreal songbirds. Songbirds are in steep decline across Alaska and around the world. Thank you for tackling this challenge with us.

ASI's membership is our largest revenue source. A donation of any amount will make you a member, and your ASI membership is good for one year from your donation date. You can check your expiration date on the mailing label. If you would like to become a member, renew, or make an additional donation, there are several options.

Give online by filling out a secure online donation form at: aksongbird.org, or fill out and return the form below.

If you're 70 ½ or older, you can make a tax-free contribution to ASI from your IRA, even if you don't itemize on your federal tax return. Arrange a **Qualified Charitable Distribution** with your financial institution, and they will issue and mail a check directly to ASI. This withdrawal counts toward your **Required Minimum Distributions** for that calendar year.

You can also become a **Frequent Flyer**, ASI's community of sustaining monthly donors. Join directly online at: www.aksongbird.org/support-us/become-a-frequent-flyer.

You can also donate or become a Frequent Flyer by calling ASI at (907) 888-2121.



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