

Birding Locations Around Anchorage

The following list of birding locations are the most popular and easily accessible birding locations around the Anchorage area. Over 229 species of birds have been recorded in the Anchorage area. Anchorage is strategically situated at the edge of several different Alaska regional flora systems, and is at the intersection of several different natural migratory pathways. Many bird species that have been recorded in the Anchorage area are casual or accidental visitors that are either passing through or got blown off course but at least 150 species occur annually as either regular passage migrants or breeders. The best season for birding in Anchorage is the beginning of May until the end of September. For a listing of current birding information call the Anchorage Audubon Society's Upper Cook Inlet Bird Report Hotline at 907-338-2473.

Westchester Lagoon and Coastal Trail

Westchester lagoon is an excellent location for waterbirds from late April through end of September. A variety of waterfowl and shorebirds can be spotted in the lagoon or on the islands in the middle of the lagoon. Birds that have been spotted at the lagoon include common loons, red-necked grebes, wigeons, scaups, green-winged teals, goldeneyes, arctic terns, Bonaparte's gulls, Hudsonian godwits, dowitchers, turnstones, and many other species of shorebirds.

The coastal trail is great for viewing shorebirds during spring and fall migration especially. The best time to bird the tideflats is one or two hours before high tide when the feeding birds are forced closer to the coastal trail. The forest bordering the coastal trail is productive for many species of boreal songbirds including boreal chickadees, yellow and yellow-rumped warblers, alder flycatcher, ruby-crowned kinglet and a variety of warbler and sparrow species.

Potter Marsh

One of the most popular birding locations in Anchorage, Potter Marsh hosts a variety of migrant and nesting waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, terns, sparrows and geese. Birds that have been found at the marsh include Pacific loon (migrant), red-necked grebe, greater scaup, Barrow's goldeneye, arctic tern, tundra and trumpeter swans (during migration), Pacific loons, horned grebes, northern waterthrush, Rusty blackbirds, short-eared owl, and northern harrier.

Chugach State Park

The Glen Alps trailhead offers access to incredible scenery and unique alpine bird species. From the Glen Alps trailhead take a right onto the Powerline trail. If you are really ambitious take Little O'Malley trailhead and head higher up where you have the best chance to see alpine species. Alpine bird species that can be found here include hermit thrush, golden-crowned sparrow, willow ptarmigan, Townsend's solitaire, Wilson's warbler, white-winged crossbill, American pipit, gray-crowned rosy-finch, and northern harrier. Moose are easily spotted in the brushy habitat along the trail. Check out the website for information on maps, trails, activities, etc.

John's Park and Coastal Bluffs

This wooded park tucked into a south Anchorage neighborhood offers excellent opportunities to view a variety of nesting bird species. Specialties include three-toed woodpecker, boreal chickadee, varied thrush, olive-sided flycatcher, white-winged crossbill, kinglets, sparrows and warblers. The trail ends at the coastal bluff where you have hike down to a marsh to search for shorebirds, geese, and cranes (migration). Bald eagles nest along the bluff and the nests can be viewed from the areas around the marsh.

Goose Lake

Goose Lake is located in central Anchorage adjacent to the University of Alaska Anchorage. Goose Lake is a wonderful

location to view nesting Pacific loons in an urban area. Rent a paddleboat or just bird from shoreline. The loons nest at the far end of the lake but can be seen very easily from mid- May to mid-September. Other species that are common around the lake include mew and herring gulls, Canada geese, mallards, American wigeons, and various songbirds.

Eagle River Nature Center

This location is wonderful for northern resident and migratory species such as hairy and downy woodpeckers, gray jays, boreal chickadees, pine grosbeak, common redpoll, northern dipper, Wilson's warbler, northern waterthrush, and boreal and saw-whet owls. Check inside the nature center for a map of the trail system and for information about the local flora and fauna. Website for the nature center is www.ernc.org.

We highly recommend the following books and bird song CD for your birding adventure in Alaska.

A Birders Guide to Alaska : George C. West
Alaska, REI, and Title Wave

Anchorage Birding Map: A

Bird Songs of Alaska : Leonard J. Peyton

These items are available from Anchorage Audubon at our general meetings or by contacting Jean Tam at: jtam@gci.net