

## **“Many Birds, Many Teachers” ...2009 Contest Theme**

### ***Ideas for Teachers***

**So many birds!** Alaska is home to more than 470 species of birds which occur in a variety of different locations throughout the state. Most of these are migratory birds that fly to warmer places for the winter but some Alaska's birds stay here year 'round. In terms of individuals, more than half a million waterfowl of 5 species and 10 subspecies nest in the state annually. More than 80% of the world's breeding population of Pacific Black Brant fly to Alaska each year to nest. Nine out of ten of the world's Emperor Geese nest here. Alaska supports 100% of the world's breeding Tule and Pacific white-fronted geese, Aleutian, cackling geese and dusky Canada geese. Maintaining migratory birds and their habitats in Alaska is clearly important.

### **Activity: Learn about birds from many teachers.**

It's easy to learn about birds because there are so many ways to learn and so many teachers to learn from. Divide your class into small groups and ask each to learn about birds from the many teachers available. Have each make a poster to show the class what they have learned about birds. You could also invite these people to the classroom for a visit! Examples of the “Many Teachers” might be:

**Elders:** Visit an elder in your community. Maybe your own grandparents are available. Ask them about birds in their lives. Have they hunted them or cooked them? What kinds of birds live in the local area? Do they see as many birds today as they have in the past? What are the names of some birds called in their Native language?

**Biologists:** If your community is within or adjacent to a national wildlife refuge, call or e-mail them and ask for the bird biologist – phone numbers and e-mail addresses are on the back of this calendar. Find out what kind of bird research or monitoring is being done in your area and why it is being done. What data are biologists collecting and why? Ask for research reports if you would like the details.

**Artists, Musicians, and Dancers:** Are artists, musicians, or dancers in your area inspired by birds? Visit the local museum (if there is one) or local artists at home and look for art inspired by birds. Attend a community celebration and watch and listen for songs and dances inspired by birds.

**Hunters:** Community members that hunt birds know a lot about them. Take a map of the area to them and ask them to show you where they hunt birds and what kind of birds they hunt. Ask them about bird habitats and the number of birds they have seen on recent hunts compared to past hunts.

**Bird Watching:** There is much to learn about birds by observing them. Set up a bird feeder and watch them from inside your house or bundle up for the weather and get

outside. Listen for sounds, notice what they are eating, count how many you see and identify them by species. Get a bird checklist for your area and start a life list.

**Books, Magazines and the Internet:** Visit your local library and take some time to read about birds. Perhaps you would like to check out some books to take home. A few great bird web sites are:

Audubon Alaska at <http://ak.audubon.org>

Alaska Department of Fish & Game at  
<http://wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=birds.maing/>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Alaska at <http://alaska.fws.gov/mbsp/mbm/index.htm>

**Enter the 2009 Alaska Migratory Bird Calendar Contest:** Submit a poster or literature entry that expresses how and what you have learned about Alaska's many birds.

**More Ideas:** Here are a few bird curricula that may help you teach your students more about birds.

- [Learn About Seabirds](#) (pdf)  
About 86 percent of the total U.S. population of seabirds occur in Alaska. The "Learn About Seabirds" curricula is for grades 4-6 and is designed to teach students about Alaska's seabird populations, their worldwide significance, and the impacts seabirds are vulnerable to.
- [Sea Ducks of Alaska](#)  
This hands-on activity guide for grades 4-6 offers activities that explore the unique adaptations of sea ducks and their role in the marine and fresh water food webs.
- [Shorebird Sister Schools](#)  
The Shorebird Sister Schools Program encourages public participation in the conservation of shorebirds and their habitats by connecting people along flyways and increasing their awareness and knowledge of local natural resources to inspire community conservation.
- The **Audubon Alaska Bird Academy** offers teachers and students a 16-activity curriculum that promotes awareness and appreciation of birds, their ecological role in the natural world and how each of us can foster their conservation.  
[http://ak.audubon.org/Education\\_BirdAcademy.html](http://ak.audubon.org/Education_BirdAcademy.html) (link Audubon Alaska Bird Academy)

