

## Kenai Shorebird Celebration flies for third straight year

by Todd Eskelin

The Kenai Shorebird Celebration is happening for the third consecutive year next week. What began as a small workshop hosted by the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and the Kenai Watershed Forum has grown into an annual event. This year the sponsors include the Kenai Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Keen Eye Peninsula Birders. Initially designed as a workshop to help local birders with identification of the sometimes difficult shorebirds, the two-day event now offers speakers on many different shorebird subjects and two field trips to the Kenai and Kaslof River Flats.

At the field sites, local experts will have their scopes set up and will be on hand to explain the subtle differences between the many species of shorebirds that migrate through our area. In past years there were as many as 15 different species of shorebirds spotted during the field trips. While the event has focused on more dedicated birders in the past, there are opportunities for all ages this year. On the field trips there will even be a scope dedicated just to the youngsters and set up at an appropriate height so that they can see the birds comfortably.

Speakers this year will be talking about a multitude of subjects including the wonders of shorebird migration and explaining how researchers are using new technology to track birds every movement as they fly non-stop over the Pacific Ocean. You will learn the migration story of the Bar-tailed Godwit which recently set a record for a non-stop flight of over 10,000 kilometers in just over 7 days. There will also be a guest speaker from Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge discussing how the internationally traveling

shorebirds affect human communities differently up and down the Pacific Flyway. You will learn how different communities embrace the event in a variety of ways and how the phenomenon of shorebird migration has an economic impact on these communities.

Other speakers will share their knowledge of photography, both traditional and digital. One photographer will explain how he has dedicated much of his recent efforts to capturing birds in flight and how you too might be able to photograph that Arctic Tern hovering over the pond before launching on an unsuspecting salmon smolt. This may help you learn how to capture that perfect shot that always seems to elude you. There will be a talk titled "Little Chicks." This speaker will discuss how he has raised his kids with an appreciation for birding and their accomplishments, and he will be recognized for this at the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival in Homer this weekend.

If you have any interest in birds, this is an event you cannot skip. The two-day event is on Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can attend just one day or both. All activities are free, but you must register with the Kenai Watershed Forum so we can plan our lunches. To sign up, call the Kenai Watershed Forum at 907-260-5449 or email Josselyn O'Connor at [josselyn@kenaiwatershed.org](mailto:josselyn@kenaiwatershed.org).

*Todd Eskelin is a Biological Technician at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. He specializes in birds and has conducted research on songbirds in many areas of the state. Previous Refuge Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.*