

# Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival coming to Homer this weekend

by Liz Jozwiak

If you missed out on our local birding activities at the Kenai Birding Celebration last weekend, and want to look for a variety of rare or unusual birds, or see waves of shorebirds moving in and out of the tide like a flowing curtain, then you will have another opportunity this weekend in Homer.

The Kachemak Bay Shorebird festival is in its 16<sup>th</sup> year. I look forward to being a “shorebirder” for this annual four day event because it is a sign that Spring has kicked in and Summer is just around the corner. More than 25 species of shorebirds and waterfowl stop and feed in Kachemak Bay on their way to breeding grounds further North. This year, the Festival theme is Shorebirds as International Ambassadors: Connecting Birds, Habitats and People. The keynote speaker is Richard Crossley, a co-author and contributing photographer to the Shorebird Guide. Whether you are a beginner, intermediate or advanced birder, or even a non-birder, you will enjoy this fun weekend celebration.

The list of activities is diverse, and includes field events, bird walks, Bay tours by boat and kayak, workshops, classroom presentations, Junior birder’s badge activities, harbor dock tours, contests, optics and digiscoping education, live bird presentations, and even a concert by Bruce Cockburn.

For the beginning birder there are several short guided walks that take you into the birding hot spots, like Beluga Slough, Bishop’s Beach, and Mud Bay. There will be shorebird viewing stations set up in the

late afternoons/evenings at high tide on the Homer spit (look for folks in orange vests). Stop by and look through the spotting scopes at the various species of peeps, or ask the guides where the rare or most unusual birds have been seen that day. For instance, there were six Emperor Geese mixed in with a group of Greater white-fronted Geese in Beluga Slough on May 6<sup>th</sup>; so you never know what may pop up.

Before you depart for Homer, you can also go online to see the latest report of Homer bird sightings at <http://www.islandsandoccean.org> or call their bird hotline at (907) 235-PEEP for the most up-to-date reports. Don’t forget to pick up a copy of the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival guide at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, or the Soldotna Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, or see a list of events and activities online at <http://www.homer.alaska.org>.

Whether you want to improve your shorebird identification skills, or just enjoy a day of birding out in Mud Bay, Beluga Slough, or on the Spit, Homer is the place to be this weekend.

*Elizabeth Jozwiak is a wildlife biologist for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, USFWS in Soldotna, Alaska. While her primary focus is carnivores, she takes every opportunity to go birding, and is the local coordinator for the Kenai Loonwatch program. Liz has been leading walks at the Kachemak Shorebird Festival since 2001. Previous Refuge Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.*