



ARCTIC TRUTH

Celebrating 50 Years of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

~ March 12, 2010 ~

Each week leading up to the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's 50th Anniversary** on December 6, 2010, we will be sending you an Arctic Truth newsletter highlighting an: **Arctic Hero** – someone who has gone above and beyond to protect the natural treasures of the Arctic Refuge; **Arctic bird** – that migrates from the Refuge to other states in the US; and other news about why the Arctic Refuge deserves the strongest available protections.

Arctic Hero



This week's hero is **Sarah James**, who is Chairman of the Board of the Gwich'in Steering Committee. Sarah has fought tirelessly through the years to protect the Arctic Refuge from oil and gas development threats. Sarah is from Arctic Village, immediately adjacent to the Refuge. She works hard to protect the important calving and nursery grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd in the Coastal Plain of the Refuge, which are central to her people's way of life. As she put it, "We are the ones who have everything to lose." Sarah has been honored with numerous awards for her efforts through the years. Sarah and three other Native Alaskans were in Washington, DC this week, along with Sierra Club activists from the lower 48, to meet with Members of Congress and administration officials to urge stronger protections for the Arctic Refuge.

Arctic Bird

Birds migrate from the Arctic Refuge to every state in the US. The **Gray-cheeked Thrush** breeds in the Refuge, then migrates to Georgia and many other states before heading down to the tropical forests of South America for the winter. This thrush is shy and spends its time searching for food, mainly insects and berries, in the underbrush. This behavior makes it hard to spot Gray-cheeked Thrushes—it is more often heard than seen.



Photo: USFWS

Arctic Action

The US Arctic Research Commission reports that Federal research on oil spill prevention and cleanup in the Arctic is "fragmented, uncoordinated, under-funded, and in dire, immediate need of improvement." As waters immediately off the Arctic Refuge are leased for oil and gas development, the Refuge's

species are coming under the ever-increasing threat of oil spills. Increasing ship traffic, as well as changing climate and sea ice, compounds the risks brought on by offshore oil and gas exploration. As Amy Merten of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration puts it, "We know that we will have a spill in the Arctic. It's just a matter of when." Rather than expanding leasing in areas that our government agencies think we are unprepared to develop, we should institute a comprehensive conservation and development plan for the Arctic, including permanent protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's Coastal Plain. To help accomplish this important objective **please cosponsor H.R.39, the Arctic Wilderness bill.**



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