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# NORTH STAR NEWS

*Your Land.  
Your Voice.*

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- A black bear cub is the central focus of the cover. It is peeking out from behind a tree trunk on the left side of the frame. The cub's face is visible, showing its dark fur, light-colored muzzle, and small teeth. It has a curious expression. The background is a soft-focus forest scene with green foliage and sunlight filtering through the trees.
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# Carrying on Adam's Legacy

By: Kristen Miller, Acting Executive Director

**A**laska Wilderness League's executive director, Adam Kolton, unexpectedly passed away on April 26 at the age of 53. The entire Alaska Wilderness League family was deeply shocked and saddened by this tragic event, but in the weeks since, we have also been reminded of Adam's unrelenting determination and passion for advancing the mission of the League. We know that he would have wanted us all to carry on and continue to move forward to protect Alaska's amazing lands and waters, and we are all doing that work in his honor.

At the same time, over the past few weeks a search committee of the League's board has started the work of securing a new permanent executive director, and they are working with a search firm on that process. In the meantime, I was deeply humbled to be appointed acting executive director by the League's executive committee. I am also incredibly grateful that our finance and operations director, Mladen Mates, agreed to serve as acting deputy director to further assist during this transition.

Alaska Wilderness League's staff and board will miss our former leader, his passion and positivity, and the outstanding human being that he was. But we will be carrying on his vision and great work in the months and years ahead.

To that end, we will continue to press the Biden administration on several issues that will profoundly impact and shape the future of wild Alaska. Here are a few key updates:

In the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Biden administration has suspended all oil leases and all related oil development activities pending a review of the leasing program finalized late in the previous administration. More work remains, however, because until those leases are canceled, they will remain a threat to one of the wildest places left in America. That's also why we're now looking to Congress to prioritize a legislative repeal of the oil leasing mandate, restoring protections to the Arctic Refuge coastal plain.

The Tongass National Forest is America's largest national forest, and the Biden administration has announced its intent to restore Roadless Rule protections that were stripped by the previous administration. The Tongass is a carbon sink that stores more than 1.5 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide, so restoring roadless protections is crucial to preserving America's "Amazon" and one of our most valuable assets in the climate fight.

In Alaska's western Arctic, the previous administration approved ConocoPhillips' massive "Willow"

oil project despite serious flaws in the application process. The League was one of several organizations that sued to stop the project, but unfortunately the Biden administration has chosen to affirm the position of the Trump administration by continuing to defend the Willow project in court. We are pushing to see that project reversed and urging the administration to consider a new, climate-focused management regime for the western Arctic.

President Biden has laid out his "America the Beautiful" initiative, a ten-year goal of conserving 30% of the U.S. by 2030 to safeguard America's lands, water and wildlife. To achieve this goal, we will continue to press the administration to look to the frontlines of the climate crisis in Alaska, a state that offers opportunities not available elsewhere in the U.S. to protect resources at the landscape level.

Adam led the League with grace, humility and purpose, and a strength and energy that was infectious throughout the organization. We invite you to join us as we carry on his legacy. \*

Kristen Miller  
Acting Executive Director

**Alaska Wilderness League** is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1993 to further the protection of Alaska's incomparable natural endowment. Our mission is to galvanize support to secure vital policies that protect and defend America's last great wild public lands and waters.

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**Cover photo:** A black bear near Anan Creek in the Tongass National Forest. © [Amy Gulick/AmyGulick.com](http://AmyGulick.com)

# Remembering My Husband, His Love for Alaska, and Our Hope for the Future

By: Laura Kolton

If there were one word for encapsulating a person's life, and of course there isn't, that word for Adam Kolton would be passion. His passions were wide-ranging, from protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the N.Y. Mets, the N.Y. Jets and Bruce Springsteen. Nothing brought him greater pleasure than sharing these with his pride and joys: Jacob (17) and Sam (15). This included blaring Springsteen's "Born to Run," capping off every family vacation with a visit to a major league ballpark or sharing his love of the outdoors through family hikes and camping trips.

When the kids were little and as a way to ease our family into the more strenuous camping trips of our future, we embarked on an RV trip down the California coast and over to Yosemite and Sedona. Each day was another magical adventure, from walking among the Redwoods to spotting otters while kayaking in Monterey Bay. All of these were special because Adam was with his family, doing what he loved —

enjoying the outdoors. (Of course, he would often lament the amount of fuel required for the RV but we assured him he made up for it by driving a Prius!)

He also loved his work, but to him it wasn't just work or another job, it was another passion. When he returned to Alaska Wilderness League in 2018 following a long stint with the National Wildlife Federation, I witnessed him grow from an advocate into someone responsible for an entire staff and organization. He relished this role and cared deeply about the League staff and their development. He also cared deeply about connecting with League members and making sure they knew what was at stake. During the Trump years when things were looking tough for the environment, he went into full battle mode. And, when President Biden was elected, he was overjoyed and hopeful for the future, but also determined to keep the pressure on and never let up.

This August, Jacob, Sam and I will have the privilege to visit the Arctic Refuge to see first-hand this pristine land that Adam spent his entire career trying to protect. We always thought that we would take this trip with Adam so that we could hear the many battles and stories that have been waged over this land. We will think of Adam as we fly over the Brooks Range and trek along one of the many rivers that flow through the coastal plain. We

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Adam with Laura and the boys, Sam (left) and Jacob (right), at Yosemite.

Laura Kolton



Adam and the boys sharing one of his passions, baseball, at Seattle's Safeco Field.

Laura Kolton



# Celebrating Alaska's Birds (and Caribou) of Summer

By: Corey Himrod, Senior Communications Manager

**A**laska is celebrated for its wild spaces and is home to more federally managed land than any other U.S. state. That it contains so much iconic public land — from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Denali National Park and Preserve to the Tongass National Forest — is not surprising when you consider that Alaska is nearly two and a half times the size of Texas and covers as much area as nearly one-fifth of the entire continental U.S.. Combined with the fact that Alaska's total population sits at just under 750,000, it's easy to see why Alaska continues to inspire visions of adventure and exploration in remote wilderness.

That inspiration also arises from the abundant and diverse wildlife found in the state — many species, in fact, are unique to Alaska including polar bears, musk ox and caribou, but also lesser-known species like the Alexander Archipelago wolf and Kodiak river otter. With summer upon us, many animals that aren't year-round residents have completed their migrations to



Snowy owl nesting in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

© Florian Schulz

and within Alaska in preparation to welcome the next generation of their species into the world. Here are five species that call Alaska home in the spring and summer.

## Snowy Owl

Snowy owls are large, powerful predators, and one of the largest owl species found in North America. They nest and hunt from the Arctic tundra, laying approximately 3-11 eggs depending on availability of prey, and ready and willing to defend their nests from predators

including wolves. As temperatures start to turn cold, many — but not all — owls start to head south. Those that do leave town for the winter often head to Canada, the northern United States, Europe and Asia. ***Fun fact:*** While females and young owls have a mix of white and darker feathers, males are almost completely white.

## Porcupine Caribou Herd

No discussion of Alaska wildlife should happen without acknowledging the state's many caribou herds, including the Porcupine caribou herd. The coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the primary calving ground for the Porcupine caribou, relied upon by the Gwich'in people in the U.S. and Canada as a dietary necessity as well as for their cultural traditions. ***Fun fact:*** Each year the Porcupine caribou migrate between their winter habitat in Canada and Alaska south of the Brooks Range, and their summer habitat (calving and post-calving) on the coastal plain — the longest land migration route of any land mammal on earth.

Members of the Porcupine caribou herd on the Arctic Refuge coastal plain.

© Florian Schulz







Arctic tern on the Isle of May, Scotland.

Anne Cotton, Flickr Creative Commons

## Arctic Tern

Arctic terns are truly world travelers. Why? Because they traverse the planet from head to toe during their yearly migration. You'll find them in spring and summer in the Northern Hemisphere, nesting and laying eggs on the Arctic ground, generally near water. However, as *National Geographic*

notes, Arctic terns love to chase the summer sun, which means escaping our winter and heading south all the way to Antarctica, where the tilt of the Earth's axis means it is summertime in the Southern Hemisphere. ***Fun fact:*** *Arctic terns mate for life and can live to be more than 30 years old.*



A least sandpiper hunts for food.

Andrew Weitzel, Flickr Creative Commons

## Peeps (not the marshmallow kind)

Peeps are actually small sandpipers, many of which are abundant in summer in Alaska where they come to nest and breed, including the least, semipalmated and western sandpipers. According to the Alaska

Department of Fish and Game, there are altogether more than 20 different members of the Calidrinae, a subfamily of subarctic and arctic nesting sandpipers, that nest on tundra, meadows and bogs in

Alaska. During migration, if they're not scurrying about on mudflats at the waters' edge, you can often see them in groups in the air, twisting and turning and resembling a dense school of fish. ***Fun fact:*** *Most arrive in Alaska in late April and May, and some travel from wintering grounds as far away as the southern tip of South America.*

## Aleutian Cackling Goose

You could easily mistake these at a distance for Canada geese, but the Aleutian cackling goose — called the Aleutian Canada goose until 2004 — is really a small subspecies of the cackling goose, generally weighing between 4-6 pounds. And, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, they have made one of the most astounding recoveries in the history of wildlife management, growing from less than 800 individuals in 2004 to more than 200,000 today. Their primary wintering grounds are in the northern San Joaquin Valley and delta of central California, but in the summertime, it's all Alaska as they depart for the Aleutian Islands in mid-April. ***Fun fact:*** *According to the National Geographic Society, it was one of 122 species of animals, birds and fish first documented for science by the Lewis and Clark Expedition.\**



An Aleutian cackling goose in Monterey, California, prior to returning to Alaska.

© Murray Lord

# Member Spotlight: John and Carol Stansfield

By: Chris Konish, Director of Development

**E**arlier this year, Alaska Wilderness League invited members of its Wild Giving Society to share a few words about why they support the League. The responses to this request were heartwarming and

inspiring. We're happy to share one here from our good friends John and Carol Stansfield in Colorado. If you'd like to share your story, please reach out to us at [Membership@AlaskaWild.org](mailto:Membership@AlaskaWild.org). \*

From John & Carol:

We have had the remarkable experience of camping in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on three separate occasions. Each time we have come away convinced that it is essential for the Refuge to remain natural, wild and free, as a vast living ecosystem, and as a vital buffer against climate change.

2021 and 2022 appear to offer the best opportunity we may have to establish permanent wilderness protection for the ENTIRE Refuge. Alaska Wilderness League continues to be the leader in these efforts, and they have our unqualified, enthusiastic support.

Many years ago, Henry David Thoreau wrote: "A man is rich in proportion to the things he can afford to leave alone." We believe the same is true of nations. Surely our nation is rich enough to simply leave the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge alone.

*(continued from page 3)*

will wish he was next to us as we spot a herd of caribou or a den of wolves. But we will know that he is there with us in spirit, delighting in each of our discoveries, urging us forward, and knowing that we, too, will understand why the Arctic

Refuge is worth fighting for.

When we return to D.C., we will work to carry on his legacy. I hope that all of you will join the Kolton family and the League family in continuing the fight to protect

wild Alaska. We may have lost Adam's loud booming voice, but we have the opportunity to raise our voices together to let the Biden administration and Congress know that they need to act to permanently protect this land. \*



**Left:** Adam in 1998 during his first tour at Alaska Wilderness League in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Pam Miller **Right:** Adam under the midnight sun on the Arctic Refuge coastal plain, 2019. Kirsten Blackburn





# Staff Spotlight: Welcome Maddie Halloran!

By: Maddie Halloran, Manager of Alaska Campaigns

**H**ello, and happy to meet you! I was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, so I'm very excited to be coming home!

Through high school and college, I spent my summers working for tour companies in Anchorage, welcoming tourists to the state and telling stories about growing up here. In 2014, I earned a bachelor's degree in Environmental and Technological Studies with a focus on Conservation and Development and a minor in Biochemistry from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. From there I had the chance to work in various environmental science and education positions across the country, from Maine and Minnesota to Arizona and California.

Before coming to the League, I worked as the program associate at Salmonid Restoration Federation, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting restoration and stewardship of California's native salmon, steelhead, and trout populations and their habitat. While there, I also had the opportunity to complete my master's degree in



Amazing memories of growing up in Alaska.

Maddie Halloran

Fisheries Biology at Humboldt State University — my research there focused on local population dynamics of Coho salmon.

While many people found it strange that a scientist from Alaska would want to move to California to study salmon, I was curious to learn more about the differences and similarities between these states. It was particularly fascinating that the same salmon species that thrive in and support commercial fisheries in my home state are listed as threatened or endangered elsewhere along the West Coast.

Humboldt County, California, is a beautiful and unique place to live, but I always felt that I was meant to return to Alaska. My interest and expertise in climate science, environmental policy and natural resource management pulled me toward Alaska Wilderness League, and I'm so excited to represent all Alaskans by fulfilling the League's mission of protecting its wildest places for generations to come.

Outside of work, I'm looking forward to returning to Anchorage, playing ultimate frisbee, hiking, and going on adventures with my dog, Charlie. ✨



Charlie and I on the California beaches.

Maddie Halloran

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# Your Lasting Legacy for Alaska's Public Lands and Waters



## Success for the Next Generation Starts Today

By making plans today, you can leave a positive impact on Alaska's public lands and waters like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Tongass National Forest for generations to come.

To learn more about what steps to take for providing long-term and long-lasting resources to defend these iconic national treasures, contact us at 202-266-0415 or email Chris Konish at [Chris@AlaskaWild.org](mailto:Chris@AlaskaWild.org). Visit [AlaskaWild.org/Planned-Giving](http://AlaskaWild.org/Planned-Giving) for more information.

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