

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

One of America's most important bird nurseries is under threat

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a wild place unlike any other in America. The Refuge is a sanctuary for millions of birds, vast herds of caribou, polar bears, and more. It boasts snow-capped mountains, Arctic tundra, wetlands, boreal forest, and the fragile and threatened coastal plain. America's Arctic Refuge was set aside as a safe haven for wildlife by President Eisenhower in 1960, and it has remained wild and intact during the past 50 years. Today, the Refuge faces one of its greatest threats, which could turn this wild and pristine habitat into an oilfield.



American Golden-Plover in the Arctic Refuge. Photo: Florian Schulz

America's Last Great Wilderness

The Arctic Refuge evokes a place and time untouched by modern life. Its unparalleled diversity also makes it some of the most productive habitat in the Arctic. In the spring, the winter coat of snow and ice gives way to lush, vibrant growth. On the coastal plain -- the heart of the Refuge -- the majestic Brooks Range mountains provide sharp contrast to the flat, wetlands-rich region at its feet, where wildflowers and grasses flourish across the landscape. The Arctic Refuge is home to nearly 200 migratory and resident bird species, which migrate from all 50 states and six continents to nest here, including Tundra Swans, Northern Pintail, American Golden-Plover, and Brant. It is home to vast herds of free-roaming caribou, which undertake one of the world's longest land migrations to give birth on the coastal plain, along with polar bear, grizzly bear, wolves, Arctic foxes, wolverine, and musk-oxen.



Caribou undertake one of the longest land migrations to give birth on the coastal plain. Photo: Florian Schulz

New Threat to the Arctic Refuge

The Arctic Refuge is facing one of its most serious threats since it was established. The House and Senate 2018 budget bills open the door to drilling in the Refuge, using backdoor tactics to sneak through legislation that could not pass through the normal legislative process. Using the budget process to drill in the Refuge by promising it will raise 40 times the revenue generated in similar Arctic areas is bad policy, it's fiscally irresponsible, and threatens one of our last truly wild landscapes and vital habitat for birds.

Irreversible Damage from Oil Drilling

Construction and operation of a major industrial complex, including roads, pipelines, and drilling rigs in the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain would degrade and destroy important bird habitat such as lowland tundra, freshwater wetlands, and coastal marshes. Oil fields attract predators that prey on birds, and increased predation on nesting waterfowl is a significant impact of oil development at Prudhoe Bay and other central Arctic oil fields. Big or small, oil spills kill wildlife. Every year, hundreds of spills occur in the North Slope oil fields, putting countless vulnerable birds and other wildlife at risk. An oil spill on the Refuge's coastal plain would be devastating to the highly sensitive coastal lagoons, wetlands, and tundra.

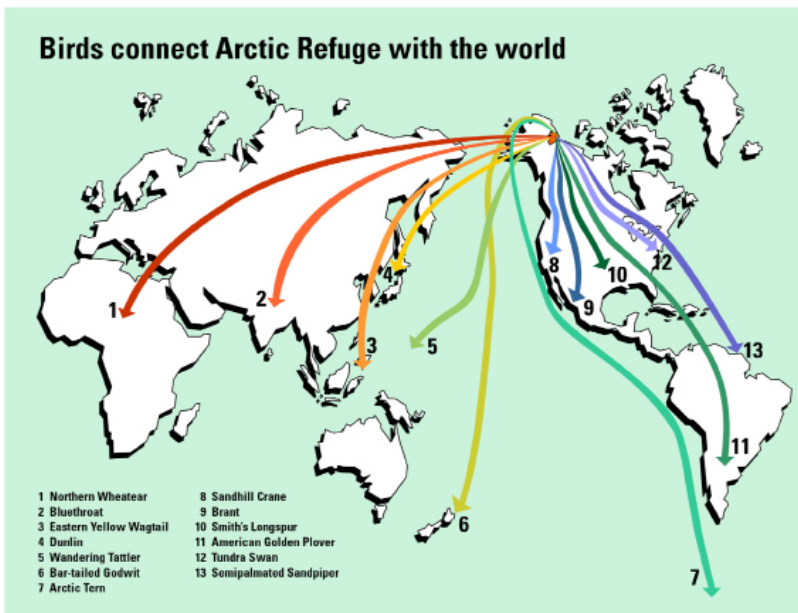
Protect the Arctic Refuge

The U.S House and Senate budget resolutions for 2018 that serve as the vehicle for the administration's tax policy effort both contain language that open the door to drilling in the Arctic Refuge. The bills contain instructions to congressional natural resources committees to raise additional revenue -- \$5 billion in the House, and \$1 billion in the Senate. Committee leadership are clear they will use these instructions to sneak through language to open the Refuge to drilling as part of a tax package that cannot be filibustered. Yet, these numbers don't add up. These budget claims rely on highly unrealistic assumptions about leasing revenues, at least 40 times greater than historic averages, and ignores current conditions with the U.S. in the midst of an oil glut and oil prices near record lows.

Millions of Americans agree that the damage drilling would do to the Refuge's coastal plain is far too great a cost for a short-sighted drilling plan. **We are urging Members of Congress to protect this iconic and unparalleled wild place by opposing the use of the budget process to open the Arctic Refuge to drilling.**



Caribou, musk-ox, Arctic Tern. Photos: Florian Schulz



Audubon calls on Congress to:

Oppose opening up the Arctic Refuge to drilling through the budget process, or any other bill

*Call or write to your
Members of Congress today.
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