



USFWS

## Conserving Wildlife Habitat in the Western Arctic

Known as "Alaska's Duck Factory," the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska (Reserve) in northwestern Alaska is the largest single tract of public land in the U.S. at over 22 million acres. The Reserve contains **some of the most extraordinary wildlife values on the continent**, supporting millions of migratory birds; two major caribou herds; tens of thousands of ducks and molting geese; high-density raptor concentrations; and marine and terrestrial mammals including polar bears, beluga whales, walrus, grizzly bears, wolves and wolverines.

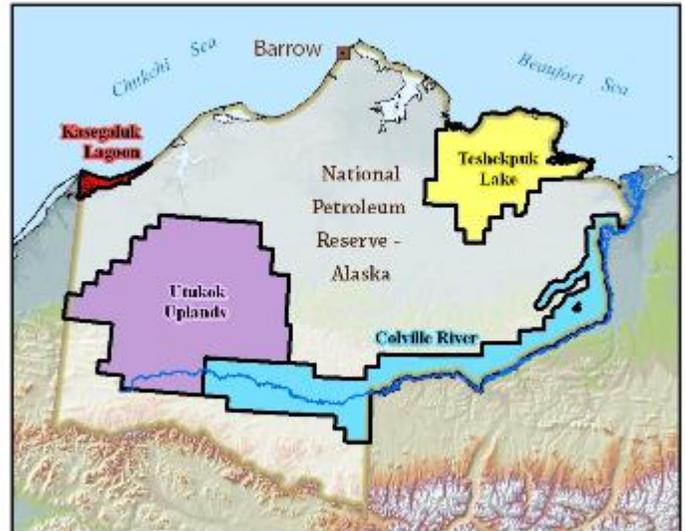
Congress has directed the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to provide "maximum protection" for these extraordinary values as it manages the Reserve. BLM has now released a draft management plan for the Reserve and is seeking public comment on how to best strike a balance between oil and gas exploration and conserving wildlife habitat.

### Special Areas of the Reserve

BLM has identified four Special Areas with outstanding wildlife values in the Reserve: the Teshekpuk Lake, Kasegaluk Lagoon, Utukok Uplands, and Colville River Special Areas. In the draft management plan, BLM has proposed a new Special Area in Peard Bay.

#### Teshekpuk Lake Special Area:

Teshekpuk Lake is the largest lake in America's Arctic. The Teshekpuk Lake Special Area includes numerous small lakes, wetlands, coastline, and barrier islands, and provides some of the most valuable habitat for waterfowl in the entire Arctic. This area provides nesting, molting and staging habitat for tens of thousands of Northern Pintails, Long-Tailed Ducks, Canada geese, Tundra Swans, Greater White-fronted geese, and Black Brant. It also provides core calving and insect relief habitat for the Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd.



Above: Location of the BLM designated Special Areas within the Reserve.  
Left: Location of the Reserve in Alaska.  
Credit: Audubon

**Kasegaluk Lagoon Special Area:**

This area also supports high concentrations of waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as marine mammals including beluga whales, polar bears, and spotted seals. The Lagoon is a globally significant Important Bird Area with the richest avian diversity in all of America's Arctic coast.

**Utukok Uplands Special Area:**

This area provides critical habitat for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, the largest in Alaska currently numbering over 400,000 animals. This herd provides a critical subsistence resource to over forty Alaska villages and towns, with subsistence hunters taking over 15,000 animals annually to support their families.

**Colville River Special Area:**

The Colville River is known as the largest and most productive river delta in all of northern Alaska. Hundreds of thousands of migratory birds summer in the delta, while impressive concentrations of raptors, including peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons and rough-legged hawks, nest on cliffs along the river.



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**Help protect Arctic wildlife!**

You can learn more about the Western Arctic and tell Bureau of Land Management to protect these important habitats at: [www.nwf.org/arctic](http://www.nwf.org/arctic)



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**Safeguarding Wildlife for All Americans**

The remarkable array of wildlife of the Reserve is a national treasure for all Americans to enjoy. The birds of the Reserve travel the flyways to virtually every state and beyond, and iconic Arctic wildlife like polar bears and Arctic foxes are part of our national heritage.

Whether it is a Common Raven in your yard, a sandpiper on the water, a rough-legged hawk soaring above, or a Northern Pintail or Canada goose at your blind, there is a good chance that a migratory bird near you relies on critical habitat in the Reserve for survival.

In March 2012, BLM released a draft of the first area-wide management plan, called the Integrated Activity Plan, for the Reserve. The new plan will guide future land management in the Reserve, designating some areas as open for development and others to be protected for their wildlife habitat and other values.

This planning process provides a unique opportunity to ensure that future development in the Reserve is properly balanced with conservation of the area's exceptional wildlife habitat, particularly the designated Special Areas.