

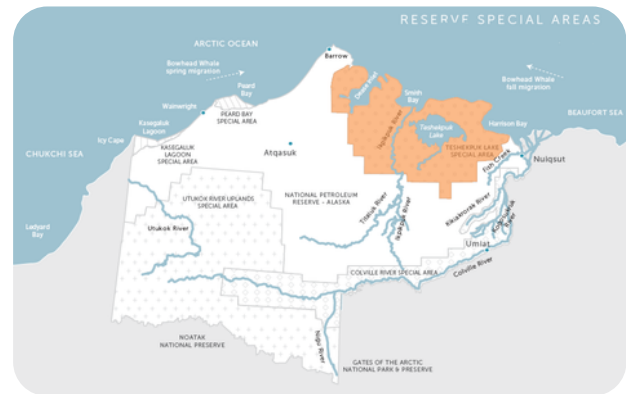
Teshekpuk Lake Special Area

Where America's birds come home to roost.



About

Located in the northeast corner of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, Teshekpuk Lake – **the largest lake in Arctic Alaska and the third largest in the entire state** – lies at the heart of one of the most productive and unique wetland complexes in the circumpolar Arctic.



The area around Teshekpuk Lake **contains critical breeding grounds** for several endangered, keystone and other important species.



Photo: Florian Schulz

Teshekpuk Lake has been recognized by the National Audubon Society and Birdlife International as an **Important Bird Area for shorebirds**, as it hosts the highest density of shorebirds in the circumpolar Arctic.

More than a dozen of Audubon's [Alaska WatchList](#) species nest, molt or rest near Teshekpuk Lake, including threatened spectacled eiders, king eiders, red-throated loons, dunlins and buff-breasted Sandpipers.

The areas north and east of Teshekpuk Lake **provide ideal conditions for molting geese and other vulnerable birds**: a remote location that's free of development, large lakes where birds can escape from predators, and tender sedges to fuel their high energy demands.

TESHEKPUK LAKE



The Teshekpuk Lake Special Area also provides **high-value habitat areas and the calving grounds** for the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd, where they gather each fall in the tens of thousands to molt. A several-mile-wide coastal band is also a **designated critical habitat for denning polar bears**.

Photo: Florian Schulz

Threats to this Special Area

OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT

One of the largest threats to the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area is **oil and gas development within the boundaries of the Reserve**.

ConocoPhillips' Willow project will significantly expand its extensive oil and gas extraction operation in the Arctic and will include a new oil and gas processing facility, massive satellite drill pads with up to 50 wells on each pad, a spider web of roads, a new airstrip, pipelines, and two gravel mines within a protected river setback. It would also require barging and delivery of giant modules over a newly constructed Colville River ice bridge. **Willow is located within and next to the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area, threatening an essential cultural area and food source for North Slope communities, one of the most productive wetland complexes in the Arctic, and an important calving ground for the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd.**

In addition, ConocoPhillips' Colville Delta-5, Greater Mooses Tooth-1 and Greater Mooses Tooth-2 production projects are located just a short distance away from the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area. **These projects are a prelude to a potential spider-web of infrastructure creating lasting cumulative effects throughout the Reserve.** Oil and gas development, which includes drilling pads, pipelines, roads, energy generation, hazardous chemicals and wastes, human wastes and gravel pits **can have measurable and negative impacts on Arctic wildlife**, particularly to caribou and nesting bird populations.

TESHEKPUK LAKE

Development and roads can also impact caribou herd movement and subsistence opportunities for communities that rely on these herds. In addition,

there remains a threat from potential offshore development.

Some parts of this Special Area could be opened for development infrastructure such as a pipeline to transport oil from offshore drilling through the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area and into Alaska's interior.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is also having a profound effect on the region – the disappearance of sea ice near Teshekpuk Lake is causing rapid erosion in the marshy, wildlife-rich area. In some places, the sea has pushed in half a mile and salt water has contaminated freshwater lakes. Migratory birds, caribou and other wildlife populations have lost their habitat, and the sparse human infrastructure along the coastline has been damaged. **As temperatures continue to rise, critical insect-relief areas for caribou and shorebird nesting habitat on the north side of Teshekpuk Lake could be severely degraded or lost forever.**

Adding more oil development in an area that is already being affected by climate change will exacerbate existing impacts on this critical landscape.

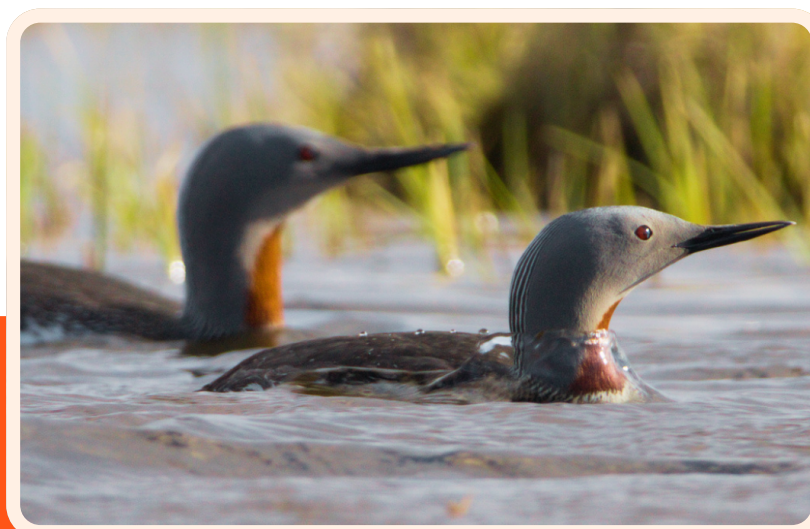


Photo: Florian Schulz