



Alaska



June 13 – 27, 2014

Guided by Andrew Spencer

All photos in this report taken by the guide

Everyone has some preconception of Alaska. It's big, it's remote, it's cold, it's always sunny or it's always dark, the list goes on and on. But until you've been there you don't have a real idea of the scale and grandeur of the place, of the overwhelming wilderness and wildness of the state. And especially of the unmatched quality and quantity of the wildlife encountered. Alaska really is a place that has it all!

This was the second tour TB has run to Alaska, and this year we ran it in tandem with the Alaska Photo Journey. At all locations we had two guides (Cameron Cox was guiding the photo tour), so we would often split up for the birding day, though at times we also checked out some locations together. The tour was an all-out success on every front; good to excellent weather at just about every location combined with cooperative birds and just about every target achieved. With a few surprises thrown into the mix, we came away with lots of stories to tell!

Day 1: Anchorage to Barrow

Since John and Cathy had arrived a few days before to check out some parts of Alaska on their own, there were no issues with late arrivals. Our early morning flight to Barrow went off without a hitch, and quick stops in Fairbanks and Prudhoe Bay allowed us to see some parts of Alaska from the air that we wouldn't from the group (and also score the first official bird of the trip, a **Snow Bunting** at the Prudhoe Bay airport.) We arrived at Barrow to find heavy overcast skies and a few flurries – rather different than back home for everyone involved!

Once we picked up our rental, we decided to spend our small amount of pre-lunch time exploring close to town. Right in town we quickly had some better views of **Snow Bunting** and our first of many

Lapland Longspurs.

A quick check for a report Varied Thrush turned up empty on the thrush, but the offshore waterhole in the frozen Arctic Ocean held our first **Common Eider**, as well as goodly numbers of **Glaucous Gulls**.

Heading down Freshwater Lake Road, we scored big when our only **Yellow-billed Loon** of the trip (a



gorgeous, breeding-plumaged bird) flew right over our heads! This species can be a bit difficult around Barrow this early in the year, since the large lakes they breed on are still frozen over and they mostly hang out offshore. Numerous **Pomarine Jaegers** flying over the tundra confirmed what we had heard beforehand – it was a good year for lemmings! More on that later...

We met with the photo tour contingent for lunch at the local Japanese/Chinese/Korean/American food restaurant, and we impressed enough with the grub that we ate every meal thenceforth in Barrow there.

Checking into our hotel after lunch and a quick nap gave us the juice to head back out onto the tundra. With more time, we decided to head further afield along Cakeater Road. The coast just north of town held oodles of **Glaucous Gulls**, but little else of note. We stopped for a bit at the large pond at the junction of Cakeater, where we got our first good looks at the diminutive **Red-necked Phalaropes** picking things off the surface of the water, as well as good numbers of **Long-tailed Ducks** and some **Semipalmated Sandpipers**.

Continuing onto the tundra, shorebird numbers picked up. We spent some time enjoying the antics of the abundant **Pectoral Sandpiper**. Their bizarre booming song, given while they fly low over the tundra with their pectoral sack inflated sounds more like an owl than a shorebird! We were also lucky to see a couple of males run along the ground with their tail cocked up as they chased after what they hoped would be a receptive female bird. In terms of display they definitely got our vote for coolest shorebird! A



search for a previously report Ruff unfortunately wasn't so lucky, and we struck out.

It didn't take us long to find another of the top-drawer birds in Barrow, an immaculate male **Snowy Owl** hanging out at the outskirts of town. It became apparent over the next few days that the lemmings I had mentioned earlier translated into excellent numbers of these ghost birds, a far cry from the year previously when we only had two distant individuals. A researcher we ran into mentioned that they had already found eleven nests when we met him! With lemming population cycles difficult to predict and boom years few and far between, we were very fortunate to experience such a spectacle.

We had been in Barrow for a few hours, and we still hadn't found another of the main groups of birds that everyone wants to see there – eiders. So with that as our next order of business, we continued deeper into the tundra. Thankfully luck smiled on us, and we found our first, a wary drake **Steller's Eider** before much longer. Apparently the damn was breached, since we found several more Steller's in quick succession. As this can sometimes be a difficult bird we certainly weren't complaining!

After dinner back at Osaka's, it was time to find more eiders. Zooming back out to the tundra, it didn't take long for us to find a distant **Spectacled Eider**. But distant is not what we came to Barrow to see. Thankfully another road provided a much less distant pair of birds, and a bit of slogging over tundra brought much less distant into downright close and personal!



Another pair of **Steller's Eider** inhabited the same general area, and a distant **Red-throated Loon** was our first, as were a couple of flying by **Parasitic Jaegers** (including good comparisons of light phase and dark phase individuals). Driving back into town we

found that the **Snowy Owl** had moved closer to the road, and spent a bit of time ogling him before heading to bed, just shy of midnight.

Day 2: Barrow

With our planned itinerary over the next couple of days involving staying our past midnight to take advantage of the 24 day, we were able to enjoy a later breakfast than on any other tour I guide – 9 AM! Post-brekkie we checked out Freshwater Lake road again, this time finding one of the most cooperative **Sabine's Gulls** I've ever had the privilege of witnessing

right at the end! It was soon joined by a second bird, and we got to watch them interact and display to each other, while giving their very tern-like vocalizations. Even more tern-like was an **Arctic Tern** flying over the same bit of open water, a first of many for the tour. A distant **Pacific Loon** was also a first, though we would get better views later on.



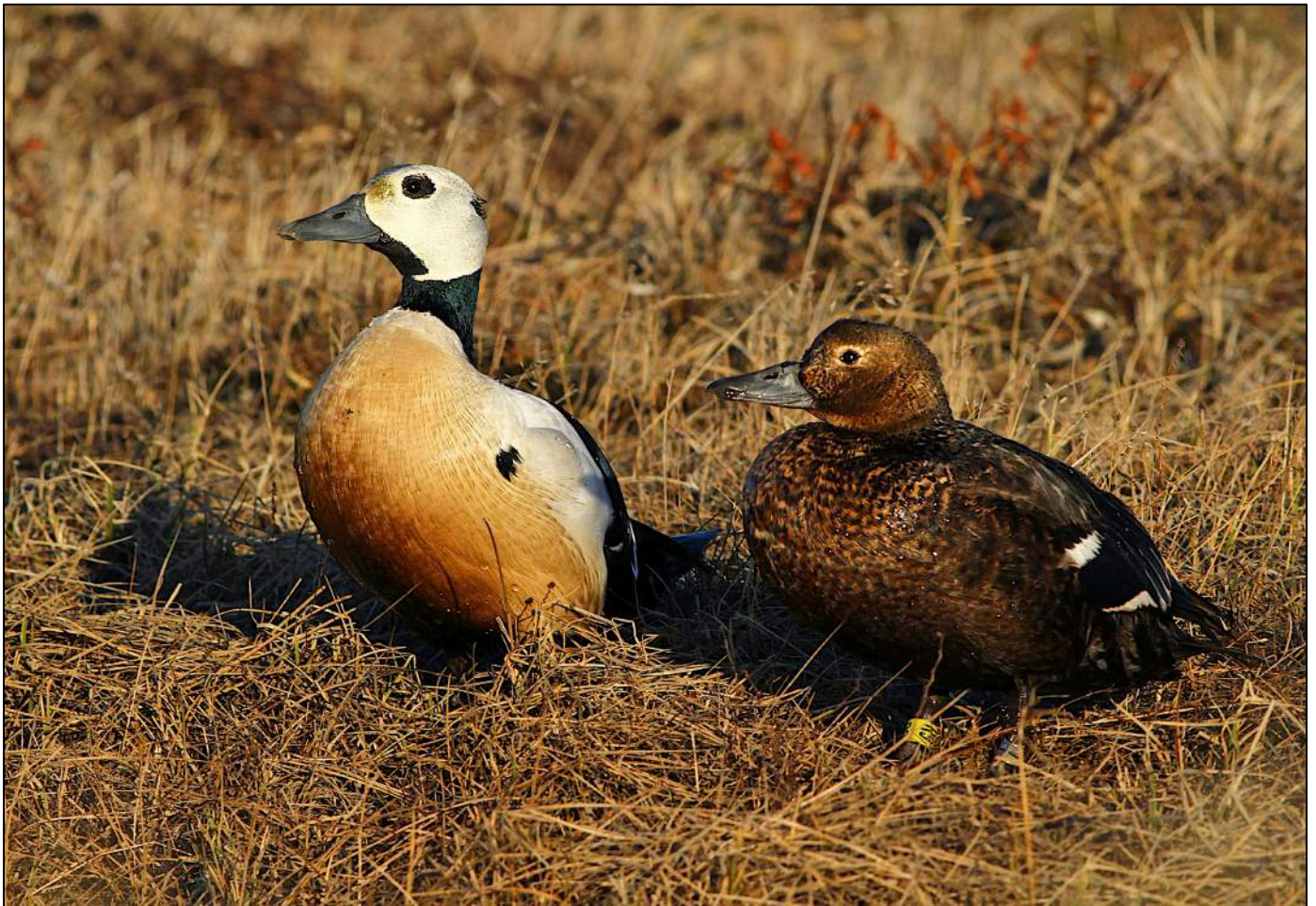
In a repeat of the day before, we reversed direction and heading north of town next. Some roadside tundra pools provided unmatched views of the gorgeous **Red Phalarope** (none of this “Gray Phalarope” nonsense here!) as well as several of their **Red-necked** cousins. The waterfront just north of town was teeming with **Glaucous Gulls**, eating who knows what dumped on the shore. Goodly numbers of **Long-tailed Ducks** were seen on just about every body of open water, and their comical “hey, how are you?” call was a constant background to our stay in Barrow.

It's well known that Barrow is really about eiders, and up to now we'd had good luck with three of the species. But weirdly, the monarch of the group had been avoiding us. But not for much longer! Finally, at the edge of a mostly frozen pond, we found a pair of stately **King Eiders** (or perhaps I should say King and Queen Eiders!) to complete the hat trick. More **Spectacled** and **Steller's Eiders** followed, as well as some good views at the stunning **American Golden-Plover** and a small group of **Long-billed Dowitchers**.

After taking the time to admire some **Snowy Owls** we headed in to town for lunch, and our lengthy mid-day break that made birding into the “night” possible. We didn't do too much

more birding before dinner, but we did get to spend some quality time with the same unbelievably tame **Sabine's Gulls** that cruised right over our head time and time again as they foraged in some small melt ponds!

After dinner, we headed back out Cakeater Road. The various ponds along the way were again good for shorebirds, and we finally had some good views of **Baird's Sandpiper** in with a flock of "Semis", along with our only **White-rumped Sandpiper** of the trip. Further out we again got our fill of the various eiders, highlighted by an unbelievably cooperative pair of **Steller's Eiders** sitting on the tundra practically at our feet! There was a lot of discussion on this tour as to which was the "best" eider, and we never came to a consensus, but for me anyway Steller's reigns supreme.



Out on Gaswell Road we enjoyed excellent numbers of **Snowy Owls** (ample evidence at what a good lemming year it was!), along with repeated views of both **Pomarine** and **Parasitic Jaegers**. But our time out there was cut short when a couple of birders from Washington pulled up to us and told us they had just found a **Red-necked Stint** back near town! Elated, we zoomed down the road and sure enough, there it was! This gorgeous little shorebird was clearly outshining his American cousins that he was hanging out with, and was the perfect way to end the evening! Later on it became apparent there were

actually two stints at the pond, and they were even displaying...perhaps they bred somewhere in the area?

Day 3: Barrow

For our morning foray, we decided to check out the stint again. Sure enough, we pulled up and it was there right on queue! The **Gadwall** pair that had been hanging out was also in evidence, as were our first **Greater Scaup** of the trip.

Further afield we spent some more time admiring more **American Golden-Plovers**, **Long-billed Dowitchers**, and the ever-popular **Snowy Owl**. Jaegers were seen in abundance, especially the hulking and imposing **Pomarine**. This species is the most erratic of all the jaegers, famed for moving its breeding grounds many hundreds of miles along the North Slope depending on where the lemmings are booming, or not breeding at all in bad years. This year, being a lemming boom year, was a rare opportunity to enjoy repeated close encounters with the species, as well as study the range of plumages this variable species has.



As always, we spend some time looking at the various eider species on tap, as well as laughing at the antics of the many **Pectoral Sandpipers** booming across the tundra amid the many other shorebird songs and displays constantly on tap in Barrow.

Back towards town, we yet again got to watch the **Red-necked Stint** pair. Lunch was drawing close, but we had a bit of time to go on a twitch. Not a bird twitch, mind, but a

mammal chase. Despite knowing that it was a good lemming year (based on the birds around), we had yet to get a good view of one. So we found ourselves just outside of town at a spot we had seen one scurry under a shack the day before, and voila! There it was, a small bundle of brown fur munching away on some grass right in front of us.

Since we had pretty much seen all the birds Barrow had to offer we got to pick what to go back for and see even better! Some time was spent with the same cooperative **Sabine's Gulls**, while a super dark **Pomarine Jaeger** (that also happened to be the tames individual of the species we found) added a bit of spice. We devoted some time to getting killer shots of **Lapland Longspur**, and some scoping gave us more **Greater Scaup** and a **Pacific Loon**.



The evening bird was quite laid back. The shorebird ponds that had formerly hosted the stint were mostly empty

now, with most of the bird probably having dispersed onto the tundra. The highlight of the outing was the most cooperative yet pair of **King Eiders** on the same pond where we had first seen the species.

Day 4-5: Barrow to Anchorage to Nome

Day 4 was mostly a travel day from Barrow to Anchorage, though we did see our last **Snowy Owl** of the trip flying right over the airport in Barrow, and had some beautiful views of Denali from the air.

Day 5 was meant to be a quick trip to Nome followed by a full afternoon of birding. And it started out well – we took off on time and things looked to be going right on track. But soon we started to turn back towards Anchorage...this wasn't in the plan! The captain came on letting us know that a maintenance light had come on and we had to return. Initially we'd hoped it would only be a short delays, but as the hours ticked on I was beginning to fear we wouldn't even make it to Nome that day. Luckily we finally pulled out,

and got into Nome around 9 PM. In most places that I guide tours this would have meant it would be a completely lost day, but not so in Alaska! Thanks to the midnight sun, we were able to get our cars, check in to our hotel, and immediately go birding.

Before we even left town we were privileged to witness a phenomenon I had not seen before – thousands of tiny fish were being washed up to shore, and hundreds and hundreds of gulls were partaking of the bounty! Most of them were **Black-legged**



Kittiwakes, along with many **Mew Gulls** and a few “**Vega**” **Herring, Glaucous, and Glaucous-winged Gulls** in the mix.

Just a bit further down the road we found what was probably the highlight of the day when John spotted some distant **Muskoxen** sitting on a small ridge, and a quick (and I do mean quick!) drive over had us enjoying point-blank views of these prehistoric

looking mammals! Nowhere else in the US does one have as good a chance at seeing muskoxen like they do in Nome, and nothing drives home being in the Arctic as much as this beast. Bird-wise the rest of the evening was spent checking various bodies of water near Nome. Some small dredge ponds produced our best views yet of **Red-throated Loon**, while the river mouth just to the east had a really nice flock of **Aleutian** and **Arctic Terns**.

Day 6: Nome area

Birding in the Nome area typically means driving one of the three roads that radiate out of town and go about 70 miles into the bush. My favorite of all the roads is the one that heads west, towards the hamlet of Teller. We spent the first of our four full days in the Nome area along this road, with a box lunch along so we could spend all day in the field.

The good birds didn't take long to materialize. Our first **Pacific Golden-Plover** was found in an area of lush tundra (both golden-plovers breed in the area, and segregate by habitat). At a river crossing with lots of willows some playback gave us excellent views of the New World's only breeding *Phylloscopus* warbler, **Arctic Warbler**, here quite a

common species. The same area was shared by some **“Red” Fox Sparrows**, a few **American Tree Sparrows**, and sweet-voiced **Gray-cheeked Thrushes**.

As the road gained elevation and went into drier tundra we found a smattering of **American Golden-Plovers** and a few other common species, but in general it was slow going. At least it was for birds. We did see a couple of mammals (a Red Fox and a Snowshoe Hare), but the highlight of the morning for me at least was a butterfly I’d been wanting to see for years – **Eversmann’s Parnassian**. This gorgeous yellow bug is a specialty of the Arctic, and uncommon at best almost everywhere it occurs.



We finally found some better activity along the Woolley Lagoon Road, where a stunningly cooperative pair of **Black-bellied Plovers** was a highlight of the morning. We also had our first good views of the elegant **Long-tailed Jaeger**, probably the best looking of all the jaeger species and especially common in the Nome area. Our first **Ruddy Turnstone** also hung around a small pond here.

Further out along the Teller road the birding continued to be slow but productive. A few **Hoary Redpolls** were surprisingly the only redpoll encountered. Our first Moose of the

trip was a mother with two calves right outside of Teller, while a quick look at a **Northern Wheatear** was likewise first of the trip.

Something that had been conspicuously absent so far was Ptarmigan. Usually they are abundant in the Nome area, but this year proved to be a bust year for them. Even so, I was a bit surprised we hadn't found some yet when we finally stumbled on a pair of **Willow**

Ptarmigan right along the road almost all of the way back to town. Back at the same river we had birded earlier we got to watch a dapper **Wandering Tattler**, along with a strangely low (read: on the ground) female **Blackpoll Warbler**.



We returned to Nome for dinner before heading out for a couple of more hours, this time east of town. The Bering Sea shore was quite birdy, and we had our best views yet of **Common Eider**, along with some more **Aleutian Terns**, some **Cackling Geese**, our first **Pelagic Cormorants** and a single **Slaty-backed Gull**, and a couple of **Eastern Yellow Wagtails**.

Day 7: Nome area

The road of choice for this day was the Council Road, which heads east out of Nome. Again we brought a box lunch so we could stay out all day. The first part of this road travels along the Bering Sea coast and Safety Sound, and can be quite birdy. This morning was no exception, and we had a good variety of waterbirds. Among these were numerous **Pacific Loons** (but none of the hoped for Arctic Loon), both **Common** and **Thick-billed Murres**, decent numbers of "**Black**" **Brant** and **Black-legged Kittiwakes**, and more **Common Eider**.

Checking a couple of pullouts onto Safety Sound we didn't see too much new, but did have a rather angry **Arctic Tern** dive-bomb us, probably near its nest. Working our way inland we had a heard-only Alder Flycatcher that refused to cooperate. A check of a former

Gyr Falcon nest showed that a **Common Raven** had usurped the bridge. Finally arriving at some boreal forest (the only forest around Nome), we had a different mix of birds. Eerily singing **Varied Thrushes** and a small flock of **Boreal Chickadees** were both new, while the scenery was a nice change from the tundra we had been spending the last week in. Somewhat unusual was a **Glaucous Gull** nesting on top of a tall spruce tree, while one of the prettiest **Hoary Redpolls** I've ever seen was nearby.

Heading back towards Nome we had good looks at a **Pacific Golden-Plover**, and a flyover **Merlin**. Overall, though it was slow until we got back to Safety Sound. Here we saw many of the same waterbirds, and then, in a flock of **American Wigeon** we spotted two **Eurasian Wigeon**. A small **Bank Swallow** colony was our last new bird of the day before we returned to Nome.

Day 8: Nome area

Day three in Nome, and road three. Known as the Kougarok Road, this was the last of the routes out of Nome that we had to explore. Unlike the other two roads, the Kougarok heads straight inland, and has a different feel to it than the other roads. Our early morning start had us on a bridge over a fast river, where some quick searching gave us three gorgeous **Harlequin Ducks** riding the crystal-clear water. Just a bit further, a strategic stop in a scrappy willow patch, and a bit of searching, and we were looking at one of the most wanted birds in Alaska – **Bluethroat!** This mainly Old World species only breeds in a small



area of the American arctic, and its stunning colors make it one of the best birds in the Nome area.

Further up the road an incredibly cute Snowshoe Hare distracted us for a bit, as did a single **Rock Ptarmigan** (finally!). Our main destination, though, was just ahead. The famous Coffee Dome is one of the most visited (and most dreaded) locations on the Seward Peninsula. Luckily for us the hike

proved to be fairly easy, and the time investment fairly small, before we heard and then saw a pair of **Bristle-thighed Curlews** flying over the tundra! A pair of **Whimbrel** gave us a good comparison, and we found another (more cooperative) **Rock Ptarmigan** nearby. In

the butterfly department, a Banded Alpine was another good-looking bug that is an arctic specialty.

The drive back to Nome was fairly uneventful, though we did have our first **Rusty Blackbird** of the tour, and a few **Greater Scaup** and **Greater White-fronted Geese**.

The afternoon was fairly laid back, but we did make the short trek out to the Nome River mouth before dinner. The number of birds had increased from our last visit, and in addition to the many **Aleutian Terns** hanging out in the area we found a small group of **Bar-tailed Godwits** (a specialty of the Nome area), and *another* pair of **Red-necked Stints!** After dinner we spent another hour or so out, this time visiting the hill above town. Birding there was slow, but our best look yet at **Common Redpoll** was a consolation.

Day 9: Nome area

Taking stock of what we still needed around Nome, we decided to bird the Teller Road again. Heading straight out to the highest ridges, we spread out and started scouring the tundra for a couple of shorebirds we hadn't yet seen. It didn't take long for us to find one of them, a beautiful and tame **Red Knot**, which ended up being one of three in the area (including one performing its amazing flight display). This species breeds at only a few spots in the US and seeing it on the barren rocky tundra is quite a different experience than on mudflats in the lower 48!

Our second shorebird target took a bit more work, but after a bit of searching a stunning **Rock Sandpiper** cooperated and sat in front of us at



close range. This species doesn't seem as out of place on the rocky terrain, but it certainly looks a lot better in breeding garb than the usual gray and white bird that most people are used to! A pair of **Northern Wheatears** nearby kept us content for birds of the gray and white variety at least, and hearing their wonderful songs was a highlight of the morning.

With our first two goals out of the way we headed to another rocky hill, this time in search of Surfbird. We knew it would be a long shot, but we didn't have too much else to look for



so gave it a go. We came up empty on the Surfbird, but hiking around on the desolate tundra miles from civilization and not another human in sight was worth it all on its own. And we did find another pair of **Red Knots**, this time with a gaggle of young chicks that scurried away from us!

Checking out the Woolley Lagoon road again, we refound the **Black-bellied Plover** we had seen the other day, this time with a fairly large chick in tow. A couple of more **Pacific Golden-Plovers** had joined the mix, and more **Long-tailed Jaegers** were, as always, a joy to see.

Most of the afternoon was spent at Safety Sound, where we searched some more for Arctic Loon. We struck out again, but did see more **Common Eiders**, many, many **Tundra Swans**, some **Sandhill Cranes**, and various other expected species.

Day 10: Nome to Anchorage

By this point we were missing very little from the Nome area. And if you've been reading this report up to now you should know what the most vexing miss was! So with that in mind, we headed back out towards Safety Sound. And this time, success was ours! After about an hour of searching we found a single **Arctic Loon** just offshore, giving us a loon sweep for the tour! This species breeds at only a few sites in the New World, and is a Nome specialty, so it was gratifying to find it at the last minute.

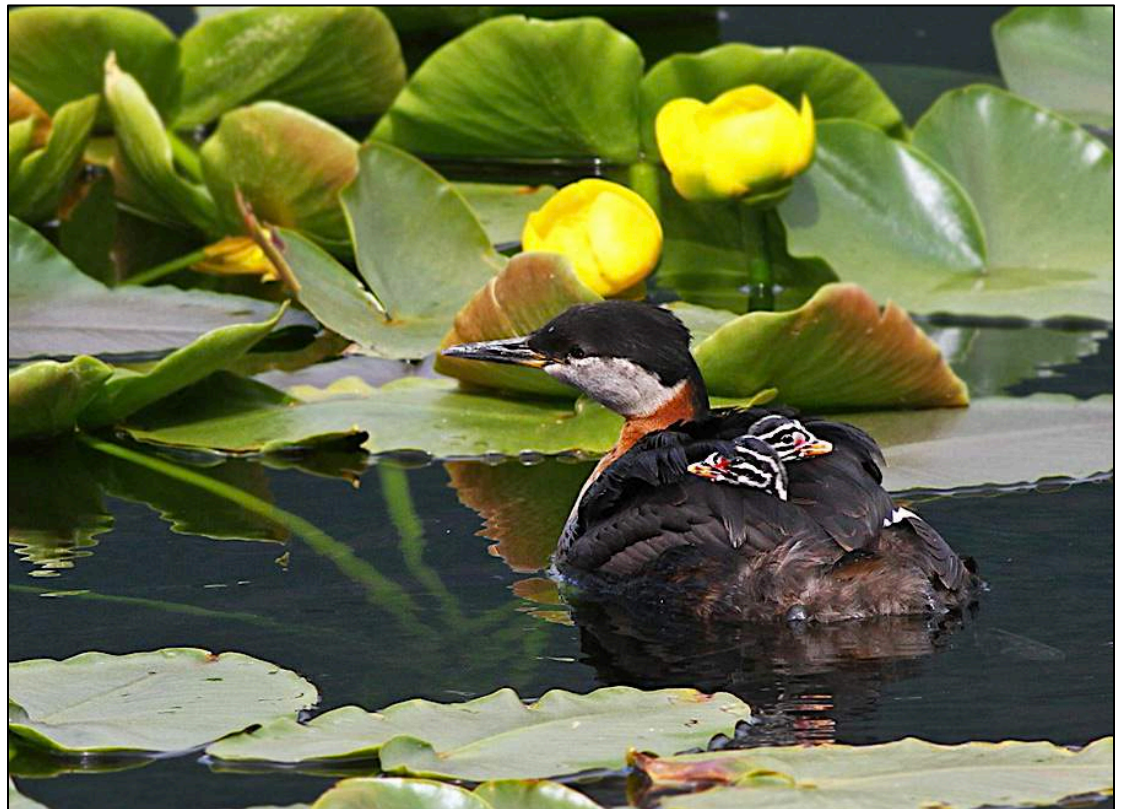
The rest of the morning was spent birding the sound, with most of the same species we'd seen the past few days. After taking one last look at **Aleutian Terns** we spent some time watching a large herd of Muskoxen. Our early afternoon flight back to Anchorage went without a hitch, and we picked up our rental car for the last few days of the tour.

Day 11: Anchorage to Seward

With our day's destination only three hours away, we had some time to spend birding in the Anchorage area. So we headed to the famous Westchester Lagoon, where we quickly had good views of **Red-necked Grebes** on a nest, many young **Mew Gulls** being noisily defended by their parents, a flyby group of **Short-billed Dowitchers**, and our first **Canada Geese** of the tour. A walk out to the extensive mudflats behind the lagoon produced a distant but beautiful **Hudsonian Godwit**, and a single **Greater Yellowlegs**.

Hillside Park, our next stop, gave us our best boreal forest of the tour. A couple of cooperative flocks of **Boreal Chickadees** had a few **Myrtle** and **Townsend's Warblers** mixed in, and both **Swainson's** and **Hermit Thrushes** were seen well. We were somewhat frustrated, though, but flying over crossbills that refused to cooperate, but in the end Cathy found a rosy male **White-winged Crossbill** sitting right in the open, much to the delight of all!

Driving towards Seward along the Turnagain arm, we made a quick stop at Potter Marsh (with many **Arctic Terns** and **Mew Gulls**, but not too much else of interest) and at a rocky cliff with a few Dall's Sheep. But soon the rain set in, and most of the rest of the drive was fairly birdless.



When the rain finally let up, we were pretty close to Seward. There were still a few places to check out, though, and at one of these (a lily-choked pond right along the road) we were delighted to find a pair of **Red-necked Grebes** carrying two young chicks! The combination of intense green lily pads, bright yellow lily flowers, and tiny, fluffy, striped chicks was an experience not to soon be forgotten! Another pond near town didn't have much on the water, but a cooperative **Steller's Jay** was our first for the trip.

Our last bit of birding for the day came along the waterfront just south of town. The very first bird we saw were two diminutive **Marbled Murrelets** just offshore, along with a

Pigeon Guillemot. A resting raft of **Harlequin Ducks** on a gravel bar were joined by a single **Wandering Tattler** that appeared to have a broken wing but was otherwise doing well. We wrapped up the day with the rather uninspiring **Northwestern Crow** and the much more interesting **“Sooty” Fox Sparrow**.

Day 12: Kenai Fjords National Park

Since we had a little time before our planned boat trip onto the Kenai Fjords, a quick trip to the temperate rainforest nearby was planned. Without too much time to spend we didn't find all that many new species, though we still managed to score our first **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** and a few **Rufous Hummingbirds**.

Once on our catamaran we started out onto the Fjords. At first the birds were fairly typical in-shore species, including a flock of **Surf Scoters**, several **Pigeon Guillemots**, many **Pelagic Cormorants**, and **Glaucous-winged Gull**. But then a more exotic flavor tinged the whole experience, with good number of **Horned Puffins** starting to pass the boat, and then a small flock of **Ancient Murrelets**, and a few **Rhinoceros Auklets** putting in appearances.



As we got further from town other new birds started showing. **Tufted Puffins** started joining their Horned cousins, and large numbers of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** joined in as we neared their colonies. Birds weren't the only thing we got to see, and a couple of Humpback Whales were popular with the whole boat, along with bunches of Steller's Sea-Lions and some bow-riding Dall's Porpoises.

Rounding the point and working our way up a different fjord, towering blue glaciers soon became apparent against the stunning and rugged scenery. The birdlife began to subtly change as well – larger numbers of **Rhinoceros Auklets** started flying by, along with our only **Red-faced Cormorant** of the trip. And then our highest-value target of the day flushed in front of us – a **Kittlitz's Murrelet!** This small, rare species is found only in a few areas and is most often seen (at least in this part of Alaska) right by tidewater glaciers. After that first, rather unsatisfactory view we had a number of others, and by the end everyone had walk away (well, boat away!) looks.

Despite all the cool birds we couldn't ignore the fact that we were in one of the most beautiful spots on the planet. Towering cliffs covered in dense rainforest, bright green moss, and shimmering waterfalls plunging down into aquamarine waters, all with the backdrop of enormous glaciers makes for an experience that has to be seen to be believed! And we lucked out when the glacier we were floating by calved spectacularly several times. One of the experiences of the trip for sure!

Eventually leaving the glaciers behind, we steamed towards the Chiswell Islands and their large seabird colonies.

While we didn't see any new species there, the thousands of Kittiwakes, puffins, and murre were spectacular to say the least. From there we had a longer crossing between two fjords, during which our highlights were a long **Sooty Shearwater** and our only **Parakeet Auklet** of the trip.



The last bit of birding was at some large

Murre colonies, where a melanistic **Common Murre** was unexpected. In the mammal department a family of Mountain Goats hanging precariously to the cliffs were fun to see. After a delicious king crab dinner we headed back to Seward, stopping only long enough to enjoy a **Sea Otter** floating just off the boat.

Day 13: Seward to Anchorage

Our last morning of the tour was spent like the previous, visiting the tall, humid forest just outside of Seward. With a bit more time available we were able to walk further, and search longer for the few species we were still missing. We struck out on the hoped for Pacific

Wren, but did see more **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, along with some excellent views of **Varied Thrush**, both **Ruby-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** and some flyover **Red Crossbills**.

More of a tourist stop, we spent some time hiking to a viewpoint for the Exit Glacier in the national park just outside Seward. We didn't see much in the way of birds, but the forest and the glacier were beautiful nonetheless and well worth the time.

After a quick lunch in Seward we began the last drive of the trip, back towards Anchorage. We made a quick stop of Summit Lake, where a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** with a bunch of fluffy young in tow was the highlight, and an overdue bird for the trip. The last bit of birding came at Potter Marsh, where again we saw many **Arctic Terns** and **Mew Gulls**, but also a small group of **Sandhill Cranes** and a single "Harlan's" **Red-tailed Hawk**.

Finally arriving back in Anchorage, we treated ourselves to a spectacular surf and turf dinner in town to celebrate our highly successful couple of weeks in the most beautiful part of the continent. It was an amazing trip, and I hope that I get to come back year after year!



Trip List:

Bird taxonomy follows Clements, J. F., T. S. Schulenberg, M. J. Iliff, B.L. Sullivan, C. L. Wood, and D. Roberson. 2012. *The eBird/Clements checklist of birds of the world: Version 6.8 (2013)*. Heard only species are marked with an "H".

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Greater White-fronted Goose
Snow Goose
Brant
Cackling Goose
Canada Goose
Tundra Swan
Gadwall
Eurasian Wigeon
American Wigeon
Mallard
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Ring-necked Duck
Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup
Barrow's Goldeneye
Steller's Eider
Spectacled Eider
King Eider
Common Eider
Harlequin Duck
Surf Scoter
White-winged Scoter
Black Scoter
Long-tailed Duck
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae
Willow Ptarmigan
Rock Ptarmigan
GAVIIFORMES: Gaviidae
Red-throated Loon
Arctic Loon
Pacific Loon
Common Loon

Ducks, Swans, and Geese

Anser albifrons
Chen caerulescens
Branta bernicla
Branta hutchinsii
Branta canadensis
Cygnus columbianus
Anas strepera
Anas penelope
Anas americana
Anas platyrhynchos
Anas acuta
Anas crecca
Aythya collaris
Aythya marila
Aythya affinis
Bucephala islandica
Polysticta stelleri
Somateria fischeri
Somateria spectabilis
Somateria mollissima
Histrionicus histrionicus
Melanitta perspicillata
Melanitta fusca
Melanitta americana
Clangula hyemalis
Mergus merganser
Mergus serrator
Grouse
Lagopus lagopus
Lagopus muta
Loons
Gavia stellata
Gavia arctica
Gavia pacifica
Gavia immer

Yellow-billed Loon

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Red-necked Grebe

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Procellariidae

Sooty Shearwater

SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae

Double-crested Cormorant

Red-faced Cormorant

Pelagic Cormorant

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Pandionidae

Osprey

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae

Northern Harrier

Bald Eagle

Red-tailed Hawk

Rough-legged Hawk

GRUIFORMES: Gruidae

Sandhill Crane

CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae

Black-bellied Plover

American Golden-Plover

Pacific Golden-Plover

Semipalmated Plover

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

Spotted Sandpiper

Wandering Tattler

Greater Yellowlegs

Lesser Yellowlegs

Whimbrel

Bristle-thighed Curlew

Hudsonian Godwit

Bar-tailed Godwit

Ruddy Turnstone

Red Knot

Sanderling

Semipalmated Sandpiper

Western Sandpiper

Red-necked Stint

Least Sandpiper

White-rumped Sandpiper

Baird's Sandpiper

Pectoral Sandpiper

Rock Sandpiper

Gavia adamsii

Grebes

Podiceps grisegena

Fulmar and Shearwaters

Puffinus griseus

Cormorants

Phalacrocorax auritus

Phalacrocorax urile

Phalacrocorax pelagicus

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Hawks and Eagles

Circus cyaneus

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Buteo jamaicensis

Buteo lagopus

Cranes

Grus canadensis

Plovers

Pluvialis squatarola

Pluvialis dominica

Pluvialis fulva

Charadrius semipalmatus

Sandpipers

Actitis macularius

Tringa incana

Tringa melanoleuca

Tringa flavipes

Numenius phaeopus

Numenius tahitiensis

Limosa haemastica

Limosa lapponica

Arenaria interpres

Calidris canutus

Calidris alba

Calidris pusilla

Calidris mauri

Calidris ruficollis

Calidris minutilla

Calidris fuscicollis

Calidris bairdii

Calidris melanotos

Calidris ptilocnemis

Dunlin
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Red-necked Phalarope
Red Phalarope

CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

Black-legged Kittiwake
Sabine's Gull

Bonaparte's Gull
Mew Gull
Herring Gull
Slaty-backed Gull
Glaucous-winged Gull
Glaucous Gull
Aleutian Tern
Arctic Tern

CHARADRIIFORMES: Stercorariidae

Pomarine Jaeger
Parasitic Jaeger
Long-tailed Jaeger

CHARADRIIFORMES: Alcidae

Common Murre
Thick-billed Murre
Pigeon Guillemot

Marbled Murrelet

Kittlitz's Murrelet
Ancient Murrelet
Parakeet Auklet
Rhinoceros Auklet
Horned Puffin
Tufted Puffin

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

Rock Pigeon

STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae

Snowy Owl
Short-eared Owl

APODIFORMES: Trochilidae

Rufous Hummingbird

CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae

Calidris alpina
Limnodromus griseus
Limnodromus scolopaceus
Gallinago delicata
Phalaropus lobatus
Phalaropus fulicarius

Gulls and Terns

Rissa tridactyla
Xema sabini
Chroicocephalus philadelphia
Larus canus
Larus argentatus
Larus schistisagus
Larus glaucescens
Larus hyperboreus
Onychoprion aleuticus
Sterna paradisaea

Jaegers

Stercorarius pomarinus
Stercorarius parasiticus
Stercorarius longicaudus

Alcids

Uria aalge
Uria lomvia
Cephus columba
Brachyramphus marmoratus
Brachyramphus brevirostris
Synthliboramphus antiquus
Aethia psittacula
Cerorhinca monocerata
Fratercula corniculata
Fratercula cirrhata

Dove and Pigeons

Columba livia

Owls

Bubo scandiacus
Asio flammeus

Hummingbirds

Selasphorus rufus

Kingfishers

Belted Kingfisher

FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae

Merlin

Peregrine Falcon

PASSERIFORMES: Tyrannidae

Alder Flycatcher

PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae

Northern Shrike

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae

Gray Jay

Steller's Jay

Black-billed Magpie

Northwestern Crow

Common Raven

PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae

Horned Lark

PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae

Tree Swallow

Violet-green Swallow

Bank Swallow

Cliff Swallow

PASSERIFORMES: Paridae

Black-capped Chickadee

Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Boreal Chickadee

PASSERIFORMES: Certhiidae

Brown Creeper

PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

PASSERIFORMES: Phylloscopidae

Arctic Warbler

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

Bluethroat

Northern Wheatear

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

Gray-cheeked Thrush

Swainson's Thrush

Hermit Thrush

American Robin

Varied Thrush

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

European Starling

Megaceryle alcyon

Falcons

Falco columbarius

Falco peregrinus

Flycatchers

Empidonax alnorum

Shrikes

Lanius excubitor

Jays and Crows

Perisoreus canadensis

Cyanocitta stelleri

Pica hudsonia

Corvus caurinus

Corvus corax

Larks

Eremophila alpestris

Swallows

Tachycineta bicolor

Tachycineta thalassina

Riparia riparia

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota

Chickadees

Poecile atricapillus

Poecile rufescens

Poecile hudsonicus

Creepers

Certhia americana

Kinglets

Regulus satrapa

Regulus calendula

Old World Warblers

Phylloscopus borealis

Bluethroat and Wheatear

Luscinia svecica

Oenanthe oenanthe

Thrushes

Catharus minimus

Catharus ustulatus

Catharus guttatus

Turdus migratorius

Ixoreus naevius

Starlings

Sturnus vulgaris

PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae

Eastern Yellow Wagtail

American Pipit

PASSERIFORMES: Calcariidae

Lapland Longspur

Snow Bunting

PASSERIFORMES: Parulidae

Northern Waterthrush

Orange-crowned Warbler

Yellow Warbler

Blackpoll Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Townsend's Warbler

Wilson's Warbler

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

American Tree Sparrow

Savannah Sparrow

Fox Sparrow

H Song Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow

Golden-crowned Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

PASSERIFORMES: Icteridae

Rusty Blackbird

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae

White-winged Crossbill

Common Redpoll

Hoary Redpoll

Pine Siskin

Mammals

Bearded Seal

Harbor Seal

Ribbon Seal

Ringed Seal

Steller's Sea Lion

Sea Otter

Minke Whale

Humpback Whale

Dall's Porpoise

Moose

Mountain Goat

Wagtails and Pipits

Motacilla tschutschensis

Anthus rubescens

Longspurs

Calcarius lapponicus

Plectrophenax nivalis

New World Warblers

Parkesia noveboracensis

Oreothlypis celata

Setophaga petechia

Setophaga striata

Setophaga coronata

Setophaga townsendi

Cardellina pusilla

Sparrows

Spizella arborea

Passerculus sandwichensis

Passerella iliaca

Melospiza melodia

Zonotrichia leucophrys

Zonotrichia atricapilla

Junco hyemalis

Blackbirds

Euphagus carolinus

Finches

Loxia leucoptera

Acanthis flammea

Acanthis hornemanni

Spinus pinus

Erignathus barbatus

Phoca vitulina

Phoca fasciata

Phoca hispida

Eumetopias jubatus

Enhydra lutris

Balaenoptera

acutorostrata

Megaptera novaeangliae

Phocoenoides dalli

Alces alces

Oreamnos americanus

Dall Sheep

Muskox

Snowshoe Hare

Arctic Ground-Squirrel

American Red Squirrel

Beaver

Brown Lemming

Ovis dalli

Ovibos moschatus

Lepus americanus

Spermophilus parryi

Tamiasciurus hudsonicus

Castor canadensis

Lemmus trimucronatus