



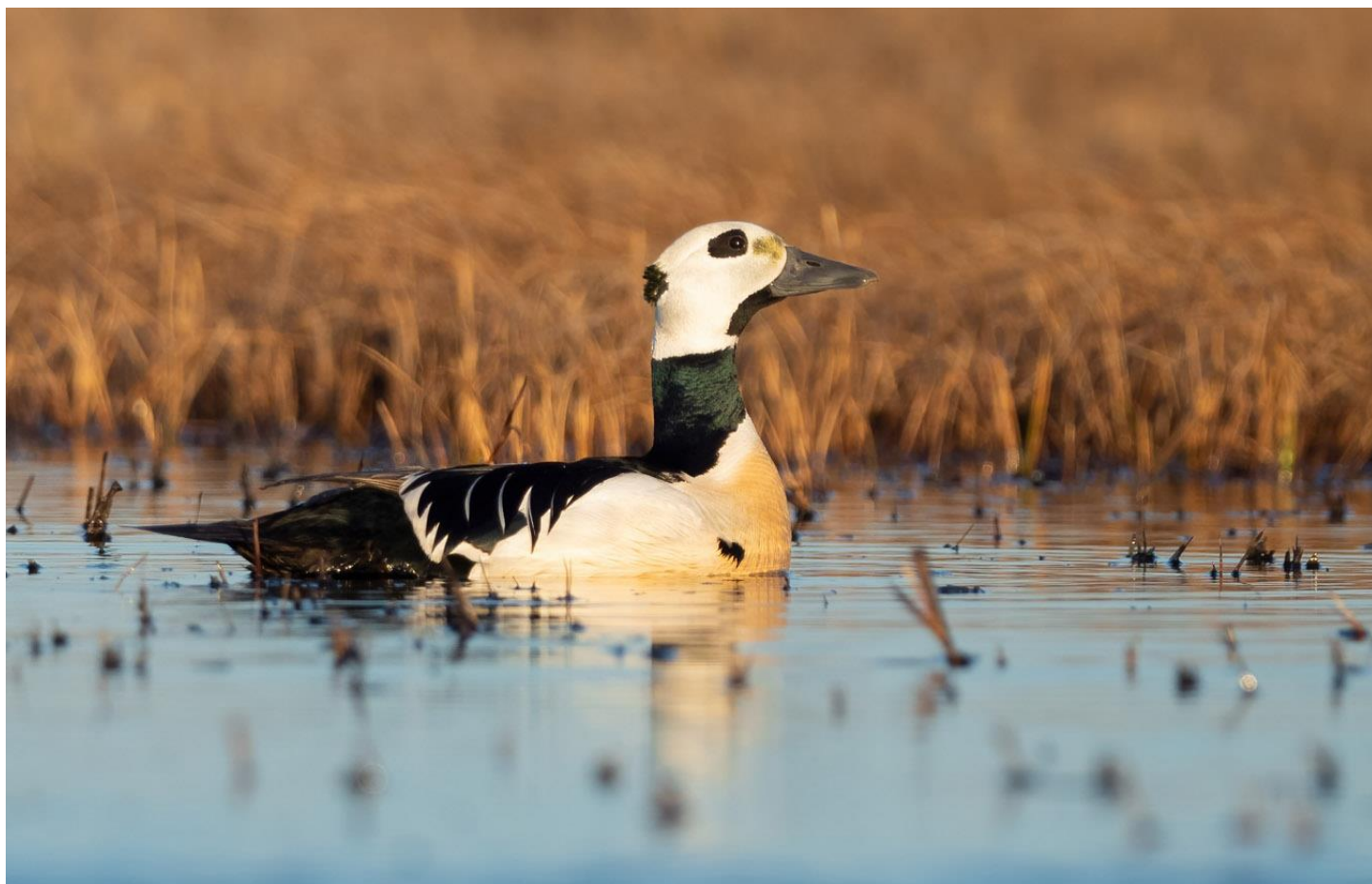
A [Tropical Birding](#) SET DEPARTURE tour

ALASKA: Birding the Top of America

June 4 – 17, 2021

TOUR LEADERS: Nick Athanas and Phil Chaon

Report by Nick; photos by Nick (NA) and Phil (PC)



The gorgeous Steller's Eider is one of the top reasons to visit Utqiaġvik/Barrow (PC)

Alaska was a breath of fresh air for everyone! For many of us, it was our first group birding trip since the pandemic began, and what better place to go than The Last Frontier for a dose of spectacular scenery, fantastic waterfowl, shorebirds displaying on the tundra in full breeding regalia, colorful puffins and other alcids, tons of other birds, and of course memorable mammals including bears, whales, otters, and the bizarre Muskox. Alaska had pretty much fully reopened to tourism and our trip ran almost like clockwork. Weather for

the most part cooperated, though Nome was much colder than normal with a bit of rain, but the roads were still drivable and we still had a great time there. And the group – wow, what an awesome group! We had loads of fun and always found something to talk about or joke about during the slower periods. Let's do it again sometime, though maybe somewhere warmer...



A lone Muskox out on the tundra near Nome (PC)

June 4 – 7: Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula. We all arrived in Anchorage on time, and some had come in early to spend some time on their own in and around Anchorage. The “main course” of these first few days is the full-day boat trip out through the Kenai Fjords to Northwestern Glacier out of Seward, but there are also plenty of other birds to see in the region that are not possible elsewhere on the tour. Heading out of Anchorage, we made a short stop in Hillside Park, which has great forest and wide trails. Things started slow but soon picked up and we tallied our first birds including **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, **Orange-crowned Warbler**, **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, **Boreal Chickadee**, and **Swainson’s Thrush**, though the highlight was definitely a **Varied Thrush** that was feeding out in the open on the trail. Heading out of town, we made the obligatory stop at Beluga Point to scope **Dall Sheep** up on the mountainside, then drove along Turnagain Arm where **Bald Eagles** seemed to be everywhere. A few hours at Granite Creek got us more forest birds like **Golden-crowned** and **Fox Sparrows**, “**Harlan’s**” **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Merlin**, **Northern Waterthrush** and several other warblers, and **Pine Siskin**. We made a quick stop at Tern Lake for **Arctic Terns** as well as nesting **Common Loons**, **Glaucous-winged Gull**, and our first **Trumpeter Swans** and **Red-necked Grebes**. Nearing Seward, we stopped at the Bear

Creek fish hatchery to see **American Dipper**, and were also treated to an impromptu demonstration on how to count salmon. The lush forest nearby held **Townsend's Warbler** and **Steller's Jay**. Our birding ended with a visit to Ava's feeders in Seward, which were quieter than normal though we did see a few female **Rufous Hummingbirds**, **Downy** and **Hairy Woodpeckers**, and few others.



Boreal Chickadee (NA)

The boat trip started at 9am, giving us time to have a nice sit-down breakfast and see a few birds like **Common Merganser**, **Song Sparrow**, and **Northwestern Crow** before heading to the dock and boarding the *Orca Song*. Captain Kayleigh met us at the pier, noticed we were birders, and asked what we were looking for – always a good sign! Soon we were cruising south through Resurrection Bay as streams of **Glaucous-winged Gulls** and **Black-legged Kittiwakes** came by, and a few **Marbled Murrelets** were on the water. Soon our beautiful sunny day turned dim as we entered a thick cloud bank which had us somewhat worried, and indeed our first sightings of **Pigeon Guillemot**, **Horned** and **Tufted Puffins**, and **Rhinoceros Auklet** were shrouded in fog. We didn't have to worry though. Later in the day the fog lifted and visibility improved dramatically. Continuing on, we had a memorable encounter with several pods of **Orca** in Agnes Cove, and even got to hear them vocalize when the captain lowered a hydrophone into the water. The next couple of hours were mainly for scenery as we stopped to see several glaciers including the imposing Northwestern Glacier, but then set our sights back on birds as we neared a rocky coastline where **Kittlitz's Murrelets** breed. It did not take long to spot a pair of these scarce alcids, one of which was still in winter plumage. We then headed back towards the Chiswell Islands and things got really good. As we approached, small flocks of **Ancient Murrelets** took off from the water just about everywhere we looked, far more than are normally seen. **Common Murres** were everywhere,

and a decent number of **Red-faced Cormorants** were flying by with a few more nesting on some rocks. Approaching some cliffs, we were able to pick out several **Thick-billed Murres** among all the Commons, and then soon after lucked into a flock of a dozen **Parakeet Auklets** swimming nearby. **Horned** and **Tufted Puffins** were in much larger numbers here too, not to mention swarms of thousands of **Black-legged Kittiwakes**. Much of the rest of our time was devoted to whale watching, and we had close views of both **Humpback Whale** and **Fin Whale** (second in size only to the mighty Blue). It had been an exhilarating day, and at least for me it was my favorite day of the trip; the last time I did we suffered through poor weather and saw much less. A shoutout to Captian Kayleigh, who really made an effort to find the birds as well as everything else, and was knowledgeable and enthusiastic about every aspect of the natural history, geology, and history of this rich area.



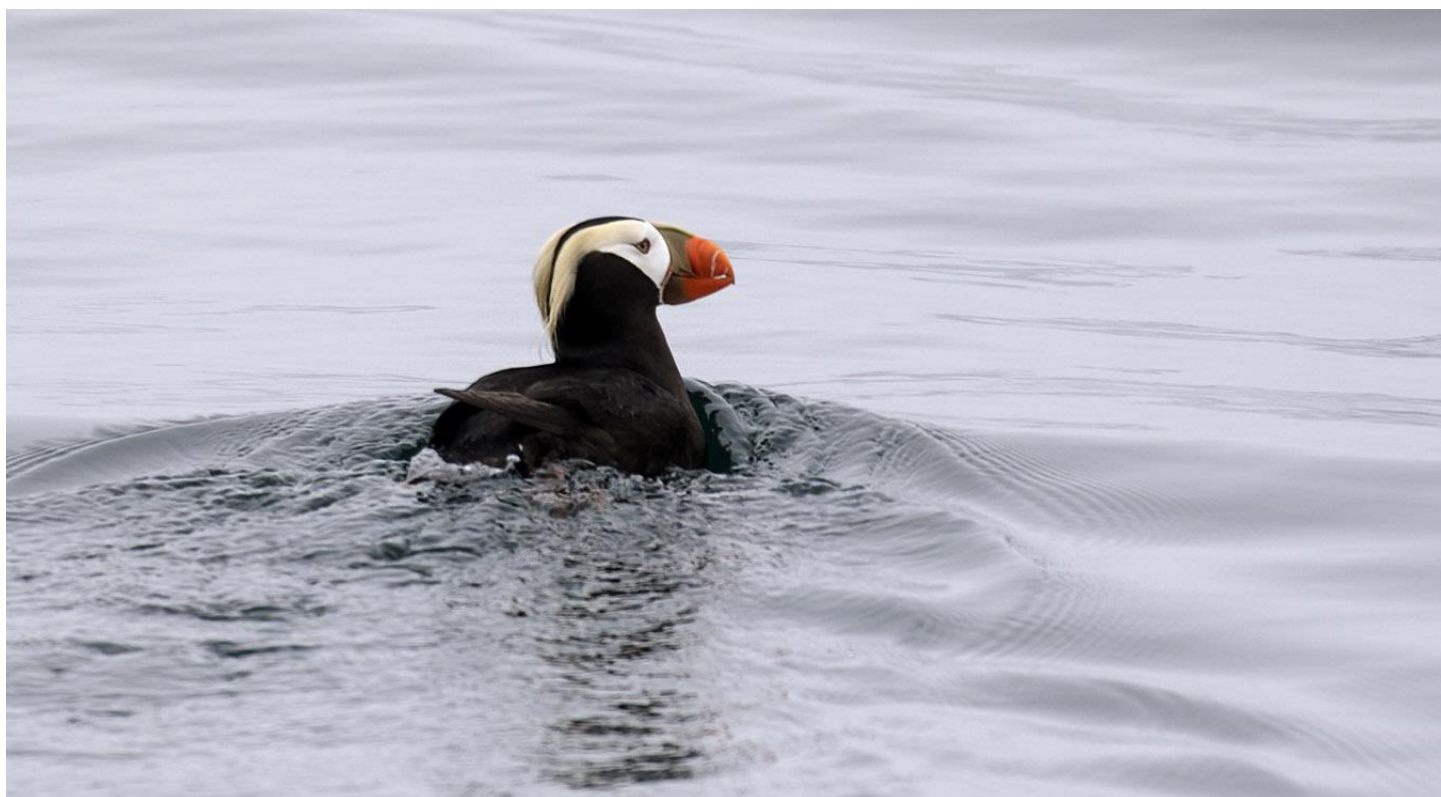
Pigeon Guillemot (NA)



Ancient Murrelets (NA)



A pod of Orca in Agnes Bay (NA)



Tufted Puffin (NA)

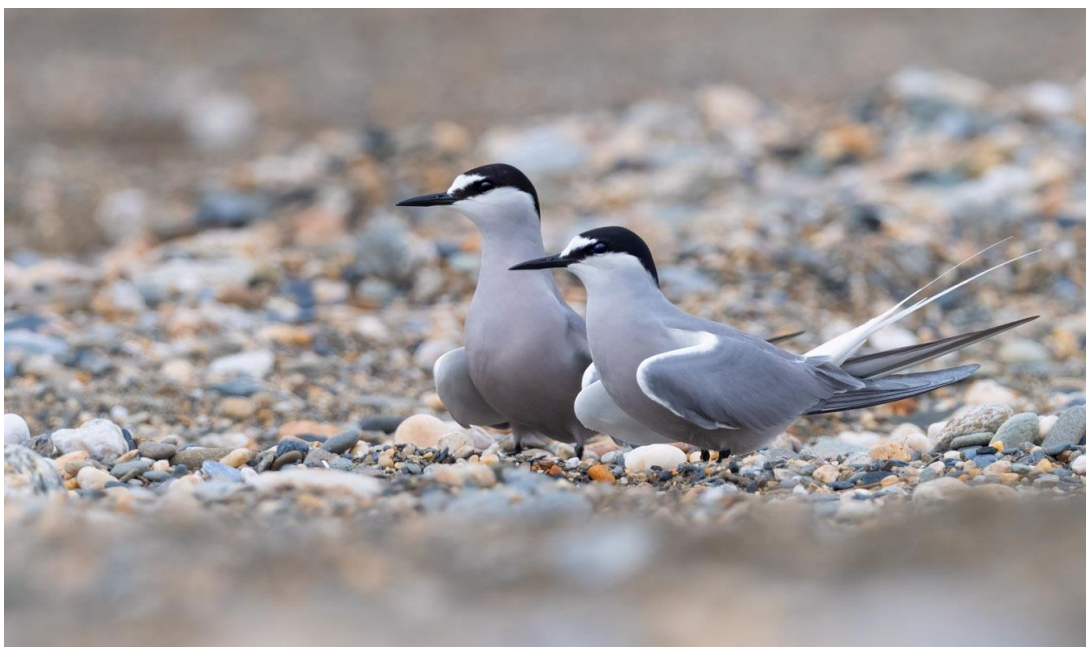
We still had another day to bird our way back to Anchorage. After breakfast, we first headed south to Lowell Point where we found **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** and **Pacific Wren** in the lovely forest there, and spent some time along the coast where we had better views of **Marbled Murrelet**. Another stop at Ava's feeders was better this time, with a male **Rufous Hummingbird** and a pair of **Pine Grosbeaks**, and a nearby marsh had our first **Wilson's Snipe**, more **Trumpeter Swans**, a few ducks like **Blue-winged Teal** and **Ring-necked Duck**, and four species of **swallow**. We spent an easy afternoon in Anchorage at two well-known parks, Potter Marsh and Westchester Lagoon for a variety of birds such as **Greater** and **Lesser Scaup**, **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Sandhill Crane**, **American Wigeon**, **Green-winged Teal**, and **Hudsonian Godwit**.



Arctic Tern at Potter Marsh (NA)

June 8 – 12: Nome. The town of Nome is located on the south side of the Seward Peninsula in western Alaska, and is perhaps best known for being (in most years) the finish line of the Iditarod dogsled race. At around 64 north latitude, the sun is up around 21 hours this time of year and it never really gets dark. Our flight was on time and since the car rental office is in the hotel, not the airport, we had to cram into the ancient beat up vans that serve as shared taxis here. Eventually we made it to the hotel and got checked in and sorted out the rental cars, then stopped off to buy supplies for our picnic lunches over the next several days. Most of the birding in Nome is along three rough dirt roads that go way out into the wilderness, so coming back to town for lunch simply does not work if you want to take full advantage of the birding opportunities.

Council Road: This is the name given to the road that goes east out of Nome along the coast before heading inland up into the mountains to a village of the same name. We spent the first afternoon as well as a full day (on the 11th), and the final morning on this road, devoting more time to it than any other area since it has the widest variety of habitats and birds. The lion's share of our time was spent in the coastal area as well as along Safety Sound, a body of water separated only by a narrow strip of land from the Bering Sea. During our first afternoon, we stopped for crowd-pleasers like the superb **Long-tailed Jaeger**, our first of many **Red-throated** and **Pacific Loons**, and numerous **Harlequin Ducks** and **Common Eiders** around Cape Nome along with a surprise **Black Guillemot**. We made it as far as Safety Sound where **Lapland Longspurs** and **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were everywhere along with **Red** and **Red-necked Phalaropes** and numerous waterfowl before turning around. Conditions were good so we stopped in at the Nome River mouth before calling it a day, getting nice views of **Aleutian Tern** and **Sabine's Gull**, though the tide was too high for there to be a lot of shorebirds. During our full day along the Council road a couple of days later, we scoured the length of Safety Sound, finally locating a single pair of **Arctic Loons** along with a tremendous number of **ducks**, **Snow Geese**, **Brant**, and **Tundra Swans**. We turned inland and headed up to the bridge where Gyrfalcon often nests. There was an unoccupied (abandoned?) nest and no sign of activity, so we continued up the road. A few miles later, Phil spotted a **Grizzly Bear** up on a ridge, so we of course stopped and got out. The bear slipped away down a valley, but soon after a **Gyrfalcon** soared right overhead and started circling, and was soon joined by another one. One of them then landed on the ridge so we could scope it. Thank you bear! The road was in surprisingly good shape having been recently graded, so we decided to continue on all the way to the forest near the end of the road, hoping to find a Northern Goshawk that had been seen recently. We got super excited when one started calling, or so we thought – A pair of **Canada Jays** flew in giving almost perfect imitations of the goshawk's call! It was still fun to see them, and we had a few other forest birds that we had seen earlier in the trip like **Boreal Chickadee**, **Pine Grosbeak**, and **Varied Thrush**. On the way back, a local birder waved us over to point out two more **Grizzly Bears** on the other side of a valley – a nice, safe distance to watch them with a scope – and we also had a distant **Rough-legged Hawk**. We headed back to the Council Road on our last morning in Nome, mostly seeing the same birds but also finding a **Rusty Blackbird** and another **Eastern Yellow-Wagtail**. A **Eurasian Wigeon** was seen briefly before taking off as soon as we got the scopes set up.



Aleutian Terns at the Nome River mouth (PC)



Semipalmated Sandpiper (PC)

Teller Road: We spent our first full day in Nome on this road, which heads northwest out of town and eventually reaches the village of the same name, though we were seeing so much that we only made it around 40 miles. There was light rain during much of the morning which made the roads tricky, but it never really got in the way of the birding. In fact, it might have helped – almost every patch of vegetation was ringing with birdsong with **Gray-cheeked Thrush, Blackpoll, Wilson’s, Yellow, and Orange-crowned Warblers, Northern Waterthrush, and American Tree, Fox, White-crowned, and Golden-crowned Sparrows** all contributing to the chorus and seen too. It did not take long to find the first of several **Willow Ptarmigans** perched right by the road, and we stopped at every bridge to see what was around, finding the likes of **Wandering Tattler, Sanderling, Black Turnstone, Cackling Goose, Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Harrier, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, Cliff Swallow,** and tracked down a pair of vocal **Arctic Warblers**. Our first herds of the strange and hulking **Muskox** drew our attention for a while, and another birder flagged us down to point out a male **Bluethroat** that was performing display flights – very nice! As the road gained in elevation, the tundra became rockier and we started seeing both **Pacific and American Golden Plovers** in superb plumage, and then chased after a distant **Northern Wheatear** quite ways off the road, which led us to two male **Rock Ptarmigans** that seemed to be vying for the same territory. A side road got us our only **Short-eared Owl** of the tour before we turned around and started back, making sure to leave time to visit an old mining area on a rocky ridge where we successfully found a pair of **Red Knots** and managed even better views of **Northern Wheatear** before slowly making our way back to Nome.



Birding a side track off the Teller Road (NA) – we were watching the Rock Ptarmigan shown below (PC)





One of the Red Knots we saw was banded (PC)

Kougarok Road: It may as well be called “Bristle-thighed Curlew Road,” since that is the main reason we devote an entire day to this one, which heads north out of Nome through scenic, mountainous terrain. Since we had seen so many of our target birds the day before, we tried to reach the start of the trail relatively early, though still made occasional stops to break up the trip and to see things like **Northern Shrike**, **White-winged** and **Black Scoters**, **Sandhill Crane**, **Greater White-fronted Goose**, and another male **Bluethroat**. By around 10:30am, we were at the trailhead near the dark hillside known as “Coffee Dome”, and started climbing the muddy trail in what was turning into a gorgeous day. Thankful for rubber boots, we made good time up to the ridge, and then slowed down as the trail disappeared and we had to negotiate the cushion-like tundra. Armed with some helpful info from another tour group that had been there the day before, we eventually heard the distinct calls of a single **Bristle-thighed Curlew**, and saw it flying over and land on a distant hillside. Not satisfied with that, we trudged in that direction and then heard it again – this time it flew directly in front of us at very close range, calling the whole time! That was far better, and check out **Phil’s photo** to the right. It stayed in that area for a while, allowing us to get it in the scope, but then pulled a disappearing act as we tried to move to closer. No matter, we had seen it really well, so we slogged back to the road and enjoyed a picnic lunch before heading back to Nome.



June 13 – 16: Utqiagvik (Barrow). The town was officially renamed in 2016 after a referendum, and means, roughly, “the place where we gather wild roots”. Most of the locals still call it Barrow, but that seems likely to slowly change, so I use the new name in this report out of respect. It is the northernmost town in the United States at 71 north latitude, and the sun never sets between May 11th and August 2nd. One would certainly not call Barrow a pretty town, but it is unique and fascinating in its own way. Utility is far more important than elegance here due to the long, dark, and unforgiving winters. This is the only place on our tour where Covid restrictions had a noticeable (but not really significant) affect – none of the restaurants were open for dine-in service. However, we had some good takeout cuisine, and the hotel did not mind us taking over their lobby for a while to enjoy our meals. The flight from Anchorage was once again on time and our hotel was a block away from the terminal, so no taxis were needed on arrival. After renting the cars and bundling up in our warmest clothing, we began our exploration. The first day was the coldest, never getting out of the 30s, but it gradually warmed up during our stay. Unlike Nome, the birding roads in Utqiagvik are relatively limited. During our time here, we drive all the accessible roads multiple times, stopping wherever we saw something, and sometimes donning our rubber boots to walk farther out on the tundra. We had the three “star” eiders, **Steller’s Eider**, **Spectacled Eider**, and **King Eider** every day, and the looks just kept getting better and better as more arrived daily. **Snowy Owls** were along almost every road – we had as many as eight on one day, perched like sentinels on snow banks, earthen mounds, sometimes just on a hummock in the tundra. Every little pool seemed to have at least one pair of **Red-necked** and **Red Phalaropes**, often spinning vigorously to stir up food from the bottom. Seeing the shorebirds display in their breeding plumage was fantastic, and headline performer was surely **Pectoral Sandpiper**. Males puffed themselves up and flew back and forth, hooting, chasing away other males and sometimes chasing after females. **Dunlins**, **Long-billed Dowitchers**, **Semipalmated** and **Western Sandpipers**, and **American Golden Plovers** were also fun to watch. **Pomarine** and **Parasitic Jaegers** were always on the prowl, with pale, dark, and intermediate morphs all present, along with several more **Long-tailed**. **Snow Buntings** and **Lapland Longspurs** were all over, their cheery songs often serving as the soundtrack for our time in Utqiagvik.



Spectacled Eider, male and female (PC)

While we had seen plenty in Nome, we had even better views of **Pacific Loon** here, and spent many minutes watching three birds chase each other around in a pond. The same goes for **Long-tailed Duck** – they seemed almost tame here, allowing close approach and great photos. There was still plenty of ice piled up along the shoreline, and we spent quite a bit of time scanning it for distant Polar Bears, though had to be content with a few **Spotted Seals** instead. You don't go to Barrow for large numbers of species – it's all about the experience, and about seeing these fantastic birds breeding in this remote part of the Arctic in the Land of the Midnight Sun. You get a lot of time with each bird, and there are ample opportunities for photos.



A Snowy Owl takes flight off of the tundra (NA)



Days like this are rare in Utqiagvik, which is one of the cloudiest places on Earth



Two male King Eiders (PC)



A pair of Long-tailed Ducks (NA)



Pomarine Jaeger (PC)



Red-necked Phalarope (NA)

The weather was perfect on the last day, nearing 50 degrees, and we were almost sorry that our flight back to Anchorage was on time. We enjoyed a long farewell dinner with some excellent local beer before parting ways – some to the airport and others to spend a bit more time in Alaska.

BIRD LIST

The taxonomy of the bird list follows the August 2019 version on the eBird/Clements (available here: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/>)

Snow Goose	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>
<i>Small numbers seen in Nome (Council Road) and in Utqiagvik</i>	
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
<i>A few seen in Nome; common in Utqiagvik</i>	
Brant (Black)	<i>Branta bernicla nigricans</i>
<i>Encountered every day in Utqiagvik, with a few seen in Nome as well</i>	
Cackling Goose	<i>Branta hutchinsii</i>
<i>Seen daily in Nome, and a couple in Potter Marsh in Anchorage</i>	
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
<i>The Anchorage area and the Kenai Peninsula. A pair in Utqiagvik was unexpected</i>	
Trumpeter Swan	<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>
<i>Nice looks at a couple of pairs near Seward</i>	
Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>
<i>Abundant in the Safety Sound in Nome and quite common in Utqiagvik too</i>	
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>
<i>A pair in a marsh along Nash Road near Seward</i>	
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>
<i>Seen almost every day in Nome; also at Potter Marsh in Anchorage</i>	
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>
<i>Several sightings in around Anchorage and Seward</i>	
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>
<i>A single bird was with about 5 American Wigeons in Safety Sound during our last morning in Nome. Unfortunately it took off almost as soon as we got a scope on it</i>	
American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>
<i>Daily in Nome; a few were seen around Anchorage and Seward as well</i>	
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
<i>Small numbers in Anchorage, Seward, and Nome</i>	
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
<i>Common in both Nome and Utqiagvik</i>	
Green-winged Teal (American)	<i>Anas crecca carolinensis</i>
<i>First seen in Potter Marsh then small numbers seen daily in Nome</i>	
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>
<i>A lone bird was seen by some of the group at Safety Sound in Nome</i>	

Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>
<i>A few seen around Anchorage and Seward</i>	
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
<i>Common - seen almost every day of the trip</i>	
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>
<i>Excellent views at Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage allowing for close comparison with Greater Scaup</i>	
Steller's Eider	<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>
<i>This unique duck is definitely one of THE reasons to visit Utqiagvik! Males are absolutely beautiful and the females aren't bad-looking either. We saw them daily in Utqiagvik, up to around 20 birds on one of the days.</i>	
Spectacled Eider	<i>Somateria fischeri</i>
<i>Another of Utqiagvik's star birds. While not as abundant as Steller's, we saw one to four pairs all of our days there, and the views kept getting better and better</i>	
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>
<i>While perhaps not as famous as Utqiagvik's other eiders, we were all happy to see them on several occasions during our time there. An immature male was also seen in Nome.</i>	
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
<i>Abundant along the Council road in Nome. Some of the group also had a flyover in Utqiagvik</i>	
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>
<i>This fancy duck was common, and often in large flocks in Nome. We also had a close encounter with a pair along the Williwaw River,</i>	
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>
<i>A pair in flight near Safety Sound in Nome</i>	
White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>
<i>We saw them during most our days in Nome. They were most numerous near Cape Nome, where we searched the flocks for the recently split Stejeneger's Scoter (a few had been seen recently, though we failed to find one during the tour)</i>	
Black Scoter	<i>Melanitta americana</i>
<i>Small numbers seen along the Council Road and Kougarok Road in Nome</i>	
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
<i>Lots of these fancy ducks in both Nome and Utqiagvik</i>	
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
<i>A few seen at Westchester lagoon, and a single bird at Safety Sound in Nome</i>	
Utqiagvik's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>
<i>A small flock was seen south of Seward</i>	
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
<i>Nome - a pair at Penny River on the Teller road and a nice flock near Cape Nome along the Council Road</i>	
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
<i>Common in Nome, where we saw them daily in large numbers</i>	

Willow Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>
<i>We had some superb views along the Teller road in Nome, and had a few more the following day on the Kougarok Road</i>	
Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus muta</i>
<i>Prefers drier, rockier tundra than the previous species. We had several great views during our day along the Teller Road. They weren't actually on said road, we some them along side tracks or just by walking up into the tundra. The males were still mostly in winter plumage, and we saw one well-camouflaged female as well.</i>	
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
<i>Seen best on Westcheded Lagoon in Anchorage; a few in Nome as well</i>	
Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
<i>Anchorage and Seward. The ones in Nome were almost certainly domesticated</i>	
Rufous Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus rufus</i>
<i>A few at Ava's feeders in Seward and another at our lunch stop along Exit Glacier Road</i>	
Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>
<i>We saw quite a few in Nome as well as a few at Potter Marsh and a single bird in Utqiagvik. Nominated subspecies i.e. "Lesser" Sandhill Crane.</i>	
American Golden-Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>
<i>Common in Utqiagvik, with a few seen in Nome as well, almost all of them in superb summer plumage</i>	
Pacific Golden-Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
<i>Several seen along the Teller Road in Nome</i>	
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>
<i>A few in Nome</i>	
Bristle-thighed Curlew	<i>Numenius tahitiensis</i>
<i>We tracked down a vocal bird at the traditional spot near "Coffee Dome" along the Kougarok Road, enjoying superb views both in flight and on the ground. This scarce shorebird breeds in remote tundra and winters on islands in the central and southern Pacific</i>	
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
<i>Several in the Nome area including at the curlew spot</i>	
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
<i>One flock was seen on two consecutive days at the Nome River mouth</i>	
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>
<i>One flock on the island in Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage</i>	
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
<i>We had a few short sightings in Nome and Utqiagvik</i>	
Black Turnstone	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>
<i>Our best view came from near the Safety Sound bridge, where we got a single bird in the scope</i>	
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
<i>A pair on a rocky ridge off the Teller Road showed really well - summer plumage makes these birds look so much better!</i>	

Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
<i>Just one bird at the Penny River along the Teller Road</i>	
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
<i>Common in Utqiagvik and very entertaining as they sang and performed display flights. We also had one bird in Nome</i>	
Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>
<i>We only saw one bird in Utqiagvik along the road to the dump</i>	
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>
<i>Another star shorebird of Utqiagvik. Males were evident everywhere puffing themselves up and giving their odd hooting calls as they flew back and forth over the tundra. They squabbled with other males, sometimes violently, and chased after females with nearly the same vigor</i>	
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>
<i>Common in Nome and Utqiagvik. We enjoyed their often lengthy display flights, especially on one windy afternoon when they almost seemed more like hummingbirds than shorebirds</i>	
Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>
<i>Not as common as Semipalmated, but we saw them in small numbers during most of the days in Nome and Utqiagvik</i>	
Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>
<i>Fairly common in Utqiagvik, where they were very vocal and often seen squabbling with others of their kind</i>	
Wilson's Snipe	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>
<i>First seen along Nash Road in Seward, and then observed on most other days after that. The odd mechanical noises made by their tail feathers during winnowing displays were frequently a part of the soundscape</i>	
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
<i>Common in Nome and Utqiagvik, but never tired of seeing these gorgeous birds</i>	
Red Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>
<i>A few in Nome and very common in Utqiagvik. It seemed like every single pond had its own pair of phalaropes</i>	
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>
<i>A few seen in Nome from bridges along the Teller and Kougarak Roads</i>	
Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>
<i>A pair at bridges along each of the three birding roads in Nome</i>	
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>
<i>Just one, at Potter Marsh in Anchorage</i>	
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>
<i>A few in the Anchorage area and one bird in a tree in the Nome outskirts</i>	
Pomarine Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>
<i>We had to wait until Utqiagvik before we found these impressive birds. There were good numbers of them this year including some dark morphs</i>	
Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
<i>Quite a few in Nome and then even more in Utqiagvik, including some dark morphs</i>	

Long-tailed Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>
<i>Beautiful! Seen daily in Nome, with a few in Utqiagvik too</i>	
Common Murre	<i>Uria aalge</i>
<i>The most abundant alcid we saw on the Kenai Fjords boat trip</i>	
Thick-billed Murre	<i>Uria lomvia</i>
<i>Captain Kayleigh knew exactly where to look! We saw a dozen or so at a colony in the Chiswell Islands along with the more numerous Common Murres, allowing for direct comparison</i>	
Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>
<i>One bird at Cape Nome, still mostly in winter plumage, was a surprise</i>	
Pigeon Guillemot	<i>Cepphus columba</i>
<i>15 or so seen during the Kenai Fjords boat trip</i>	
Marbled Murrelet	<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>
<i>Small numbers seen during the boat trip, but we had better views in the scope the following morning near Lowell Point. They nest high in old growth trees</i>	
Kittlitz's Murrelet	<i>Brachyramphus brevirostris</i>
<i>A big target on the boat trip, and one of the main reasons we do the 8.5 hour trip. We did manage to find two birds near Northwestern Glacier, one still in winter plumage</i>	
Ancient Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus antiquus</i>
<i>We would have been happy to see just one on the Kenai Fjords boat trip, but for a short period during the afternoon they were all around us, giving us many views of this unique alcid, around 40 and probably more than that.</i>	
Parakeet Auklet	<i>Aethia psittacula</i>
<i>It took a while, but Captain Kayleigh tracked down a flock of about a dozen in the Chiswell Islands</i>	
Rhinoceros Auklet	<i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>
<i>Small numbers seen during the boat trip</i>	
Horned Puffin	<i>Fratercula corniculata</i>
<i>One of the star birds of the Kenai Fjords boat trip, and we saw many of them both swimming and flying. We also had a lone bird at Cape Nome.</i>	
Tufted Puffin	<i>Fratercula cirrhata</i>
<i>There were hundreds of them during the boat trip and we never tired of seeing this stunning alcid</i>	
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
<i>Swarms of them (thousands?) around Beehive Island during the boat trip. Also seen around Seward, in Nome, and even a single bird in Utqiagvik.</i>	
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>
<i>What an amazing-looking gull! We saw them along the Council Road in Nome, and also had one in Utqiagvik</i>	
Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>
<i>A few of the group saw one in the lake next to our hotel in Anchorage</i>	
Mew Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
<i>Common around Anchorage, Seward, and in Nome</i>	

Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
<i>A few seen in scattered locations in Anchorage, Seward, and Nome. All seemed to be smithsonianus</i>	
Iceland Gull (Thayer's)	<i>Larus glaucooides thayeri</i>
<i>Phil managed to get us on one in a big gull flock at Seward</i>	
Slaty-backed Gull	<i>Larus schistisagus</i>
<i>Two immature birds at the Nome River mouth for those who went out at low tide (which was inconveniently late during our time there)</i>	
Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>
<i>The most common gull around Seward. There were also a handful in the Nome area</i>	
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
<i>Common in Nome and Utqiagvik</i>	
Aleutian Tern	<i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i>
<i>We saw this handsome tern well at the mouth of the Nome River</i>	
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
<i>The "default" tern for most of the trip. We saw them pretty much everywhere</i>	
Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
<i>Common in Nome and Utqiagvik, and gorgeous this time of year</i>	
Arctic Loon	<i>Gavia arctica</i>
<i>It took a while, but we eventually scope a pair in Safety Sound along the Concil Road in Nome</i>	
Pacific Loon	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>
<i>Numerous satisfying views of this superb bird in Nome and Utqiagvik, and we also enjoyed hearing them sing</i>	
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>
<i>We saw one on a nest at Tern Lake on the way to Seward, and also saw them a couple of times in Nome</i>	
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>
<i>A few were seen during the Kenai Fjords boat trip</i>	
Red-faced Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax urile</i>
<i>Around a dozen seen in the Chiswell Islands on the Kenai Fjords boat trip</i>	
Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>
<i>Best seen on the boat trip, with a few more around Cape Nome</i>	
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>
<i>Lots on the boat trip and around Lowell Point</i>	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
<i>One seen along the Teller Road in Nome</i>	
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>
<i>Several along the Teller and Kougarak Roads in Nome</i>	
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
<i>Many seen between Anchorage and Seward, and a few also seen during the boat trip</i>	
Red-tailed Hawk (Harlan's)	<i>Buteo jamaicensis harlani</i>
<i>Two birds seen at Granite Creek on the way to Seward</i>	

Rough-legged Hawk	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>
<i>We saw just one, along the Council Road in Nome</i>	
Snowy Owl	<i>Bubo scandiacus</i>
<i>Wow, they must have done well in recent years, since we saw them every day in Utqiagvik, and probably as many as 6-8 on one of the days. An iconic bird of the Arctic tundra</i>	
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
<i>A single distant bird was seen hunting over the tundra near where we turned around on the Teller Road</i>	
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megascops alcyon</i>
<i>Our lone "heard only" bird of the tour, at Ava's feeders in Seward. It must have been flying at stratospheric heights since no one could spot it as it went over</i>	
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>
<i>At Ava's feeders in Seward</i>	
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates villosus</i>
<i>Also at Ava's feeders in Seward</i>	
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
<i>A couple of brief sightings, at Granite Creek and in Nome</i>	
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>
<i>No sign of them around the well-known nest along the Council Road. A bit farther up the road we stopped for a Grizzly that quickly disappeared, and found a pair of Gyr Falcons! They soared overhead for a while, then one perched on a distant hilltop</i>	
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
<i>Just one in Utqiagvik</i>	
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>
<i>One in Hillside Park near Anchorage</i>	
Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>
<i>Singles seen in Nome along the Kougark Road and Council Road</i>	
Northern Shrike	<i>Lanius borealis</i>
<i>Two seen perched on wires near the town of Nome</i>	
Canada (Gray) Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>
<i>A pair at Bear Creek near the end of the Council Road seemed to be imitating the calls of Northern Goshawk</i>	
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>
<i>Several seen in the Seward area</i>	
Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>
<i>Easy to see in and around Anchorage and Seward, including from the airport</i>	
Northwestern Crow	<i>Corvus caurinus</i>
<i>Common around Seward. It is about to be lumped with American Crow, but we can enjoy it until the next taxonomy update...</i>	
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
<i>One of the most widespread birds in Alaska. We saw them every day</i>	
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>
<i>Anchorage and Seward. Best seen at Ava's feeders</i>	

Chestnut-backed Chickadee	<i>Poecile rufescens</i>
<i>Several confiding birds at Lowell Point south of Seward</i>	
Boreal Chickadee	<i>Poecile hudsonicus</i>
<i>Nice views around Anchorage, Granite Creek, and also in Nome near the end of the Council road</i>	
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>
<i>Daily in Anchorage, Seward, and Nome</i>	
Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>
<i>Nice sightings during our time in Anchorage and Seward</i>	
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
<i>A few in Seward and Nome</i>	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
<i>One bird along Nash Road in Seward</i>	
Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>
<i>They nest under some of the bridges along the Teller and Kougarak Roads in Nome</i>	
Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>
<i>A pair seen well along the Teller Road, and heard in various other places in Nome</i>	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>
<i>Seen in two places between Anchorage and Seward</i>	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>
<i>Ditto for this one</i>	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>
<i>Seen best at Ava's Feeders in Seward</i>	
Pacific Wren	<i>Troglodytes pacificus</i>
<i>One was teed up and singing its head off at Lowell Point south of Seward</i>	
American Dipper	<i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>
<i>One bird was at the fish hatchery near Bear Lake in Seward</i>	
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
<i>Anchorage, from the car</i>	
Varied Thrush	<i>Ixoreus naevius</i>
<i>Nice views in various places around Anchorage and Seward and point in between. Also seen briefly in the forest near the end of the Council road in Nome</i>	
Gray-cheeked Thrush	<i>Catharus minimus</i>
<i>Daily in Nome, and they seemed to be perched up and singing in every patch of willows along the Teller Road. Also one at the lunch stop along Exit Glacier Road</i>	
Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>
<i>One scoped at Hillside Park in Anchorage, and we also enjoyed hearing it sing</i>	
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>
<i>Best seen at Hillside Park in Anchorage</i>	
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
<i>We saw this familiar bird almost everywhere except Utqiagvik</i>	

Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
<i>Handsome males seen on both the Teller and Kougarak Roads in Nome. This and the next species are the only members of the family Muscicapidae, or Old World Flycatchers, that breed in North America</i>	
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
<i>Several encounters on the Teller Road in Nome. The first ones were distant, but we eventually got a perfect view of a male and female perching side by side on a rock. Another was glimpsed near the highest point on the Council Road</i>	
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>
<i>One at the Penny River Bridge on the Teller Road, and another near Swanberg Dredge near Nome</i>	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
<i>Phil and Jim were the only ones to see it near Nome Airport - a bonus for having to wait for another cab!</i>	
Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>
<i>A pair at Ava's feeders in Seward, and another pair in Nome near the end of the Council Road</i>	
Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>
<i>See below</i>	
Hoary Redpoll	<i>Acanthis hornemanni</i>
<i>Redpolls were super common around Nome, so we had plenty of chances to appreciate how variable they are. Some were "classic" Hoaries and Commons, though most we did not try to identify to species. In Utqiagvik there were definitely Commons, and one looked good for Hoary but was not seen very well. They have already survived one proposal to lump them, but I would not be surprised if it eventually happens...</i>	
Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>
<i>Anchorage, Seward, and points in between. Common.</i>	
Lapland Longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>
<i>Common and conspicuous in Nome and Utqiagvik, with males singing on elevated perches and performing display flights+A319</i>	
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>
<i>Utqiagvik would not be the same without these fantastic little birds!</i>	
American Tree Sparrow	<i>Spizelloides arborea</i>
<i>Small numbers seen daily in Nome</i>	
Fox Sparrow (Red)	<i>Passerella iliaca zaboria</i>
<i>Nome - we had them on most days there. Very different from the ones on the Kenai Peninsula (next)</i>	
Fox Sparrow (Sooty)	<i>Passerella iliaca [unalaschcensis Group]</i>
<i>Seen best at Granite Creek in Chugach National Forest. Much darker than the ones in Nome, more reminiscent of the local race of Song Sparrow</i>	
Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)	<i>Junco hyemalis hyemalis</i>
<i>Seen in Anchorage and Seward</i>	
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>
<i>Just about everywhere but Utqiagvik</i>	

Golden-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia atricapilla</i>
<i>First seen at Granite Creek and then a few more good views in Nome</i>	
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
<i>Daily in Nome, and a few in Utqiagvik</i>	
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia kenaiensis</i>
<i>Several in and around Seward. Alaskan birds are larger and darker than those in most of the rest of its range. This species just might make a taxonomist throw up their hands in frustration - 24 subspecies are generally recognized with numerous other forms not given that status. And then there is something called clinal variation...</i>	
Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolnii</i>
<i>A pair seen well at Potter Marsh in Anchorage</i>	
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>
<i>A single bird at Potter Marsh in Anchorage. Almost qualifies as a rarity on this tour!</i>	
Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>
<i>One male at Swanberg Dredge in Nome. Phil and a few others also had one in Utqiagvik, where it is quite rare</i>	
Northern Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>
<i>First in Granite Creek - it was singing at the very top of a tall tree. Several more were seen in Nome</i>	
Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis celata</i>
<i>Anchorage, Seward, and Nome</i>	
Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>
<i>Common in Anchorage, Seward, and Nome</i>	
Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Setophaga striata</i>
<i>We saw several in Nome and heard a lot more</i>	
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)	<i>Setophaga coronata coronata</i>
<i>Anchorage, Seward, and one at the end of the Council Road</i>	
Townsend's Warbler	<i>Setophaga townsendi</i>
<i>Several showed nicely around Seward and Lowell Point</i>	
Wilson's Warbler	<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>
<i>Common in Anchorage, Seward, and Nome</i>	

MAMMALS

Arctic Fox	<i>Alopex lagopus</i>
<i>Nome and Utqiagvik. The one in Utqiagvik was in the process of shedding its winter coat and looked awful!</i>	
Brown (Grizzly) Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>
<i>Three seen from the Council Road in Nome</i>	
Harbor Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>
<i>Quite a few at Northwestern Glacier on the boat trip</i>	
Spotted Seal	<i>Phoca largha</i>
<i>Several hauled out on ice in Utqiagvik. A few of the very distant seals were too far to be sure, since they can look similar to Ringed Seal</i>	
Steller's Sea Lion	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>

Many during the Kenai Fjords boat trip, and a few at Lowell Point

Sea Otter***Enhydra lutris***

Several seen during the boat trip, but not as many as usual

Moose***Alces alces***

One near Turnagain Arm and several in Nome

Caribou***Rangifer tarandus granti***

A lone animal was spotted in Utqiagvik

Mountain Goat***Oreamnos americanus***

One seen next to a waterfall high above us during the Kenai Fjords boat trip

Dall Sheep***Ovis dalli***

A couple of small herds scoped from Beluga Point

Muskox***Ovibos moschatus***

Herds seen along all three of the roads in Nome. This species was extirpated from Alaska by the 1920s due to overhunting, but was successfully reintroduced over the course of the following century

Humpback Whale***Megaptera novaeangliae***

At least two seen during the Kenai Fjords boat trip

Fin Whale***Balaenoptera physalus***

Two of these giants were also encountered during the boat trip

Orca (Killer Whale)***Orcinus orca***

At least 20 in Agnes Cove in the Kenai Fjords. These are the ones known as "resident orcas" that eat only fish

Dall's Porpoise***Phocoenoides dalli***

One was briefly glimpsed during the boat trip

Snowshoe Hare***Lepus americanus***

Several in Nome. They had mostly attained their summer coat, with only their oversized rear paws remaining white

Arctic Ground Squirrel***Spermophilus parryii***

Several in Nome

Red Squirrel***Tamiasciurus hudsonicus***

Anchorage, Seward, and the forest at the end of the Council Road

North American Beaver***Castor canadensis***

One along the Council Road, and we saw several of their dams elsewhere