



Our beautiful male Spruce Grouse (Craig Robson)

ALASKA

29 May/2-18 June 2022

LEADERS CRAIG ROBSON

Alaska never ceases to delight and amaze us, and our latest adventure there, after a Covid-19 enforced 4-year gap, was no exception. The highlights among the 189 bird species that we enjoyed in 2022 were too numerous to mention, but included: Spruce Grouse, Emperor Goose, the much-wanted Spectacled Eider, Steller's and King Eiders, Gyrfalcon at the nest with young, Hudsonian Godwit, Black Turnstone, Rock Sandpiper, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Aleutian Tern, Marbled, Kittlitz's, and Ancient Murrelets, Parakeet, Whiskered, Crested, Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets, Horned and Tufted Puffins, Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk-Owl, Laysan and Black-browed Albatrosses, record sightings of American Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, Pacific Wren, Varied Thrush, Sooty Fox Sparrow, and the impeccable Smith's Longspur. Rarities were limited this year, without a visit to St Paul, but included Bar-tailed Godwit, Little Stint, Vega Gull,

and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, as well as the East Asian outpost-residents in the form of Arctic Warbler, Bluethroat, and Eastern Yellow (or Alaskan) Wagtail. We also found no fewer than 27 species of mammal, the cream of the crop being Canada Lynx, a swimming Black Bear, breaching Humpback and Killer Whales, numerous Moose, and the hulking great Musk Ox. We were blessed with good weather everywhere, and generally smooth-running logistics.

The group rendezvous point for the pre-tour extension to Dutch Harbor was at the check-in counter for the outbound flight, and we lined-up in eager anticipation of our journey to what would be a new destination for all of us. Unfortunately, we were quickly brought back down to earth with a vengeance, as we learned that our early morning flight had been cancelled. I don't want to relate all the tedious details of our 24-hour delay in getting to Dutch Harbor, as it is a fairly regular weather-related problem, but it did include the entire group (apart from the leader) managing to get on a later flight, flying almost all the way there, before being taken down to Cold Harbor, and then returned to Anchorage. Anyway, 24 hours later than planned, we did arrive, and it was a massive relief.



Whiskered Auklet at the Baby Islands, near Dutch Harbor (Craig Robson)

With three full days remaining at Dutch, and weather constantly a factor, we immediately embarked on our first cruise, with the renowned captain Jimmer at the helm and local bird guide Lynda Lybeck-Robinson at the ready on deck. As we cruised out into the sound, a flock of Emperor Geese passed over going in the opposite direction, giving only poor views. We refocussed on our main targets here, which were the seabirds of course, and in particular the diminutive Whiskered Auklet. We headed to one of its regular haunts around the Baby Islands to the north-east. En route there were breeding colonies of Double-crested Cormorant and Glaucous-winged Gull, a nice pair of Bald Eagles at the nest with a tiny youngster, we had our first looks at Red-faced Cormorant and Parakeet Auklet, and there were huge numbers of cracking Ancient Murrelets and Pigeon Guillemots, as well as a few Marbled Murrelets, Thick-billed Murres (or Brünnich's Guillemots), and Black Oystercatchers. Approaching the islands there were huge rafts of Tufted Puffins, as well as a few Horned, and before long, we spotted our first Whiskered Auklets. Jimmer skilfully manoeuvred us through the currents for more views and, in so doing, we also found a number of scarce Cassin's Auklets and a dozen or so Crested Auklets.

From the Baby Island we made a straight-shot to the north-west and the Chelan Banks. Not far before the banks, we passed through a huge flock of Short-tailed Shearwaters, totalling around 4,000 individuals. Once there, Lynda tossed handfuls of chopped fish off the back of the boat, and we were treated to fantastic views of around 30 Laysan Albatrosses, a few Black-footed Albatrosses, numerous (mainly dark morph) Northern Fulmars and a few Short-tailed Shearwaters. We cruised back to harbour well satisfied.



Laysan Albatross (Craig Robson)

The following day, Lynda guided us to a number of birding locations on Unalaska, starting at Sitka National Historic Park (Alaska's smallest), a tiny plantation and local migrant-trap. Unalaska Lake, Summer Bay Road, Humpy Cove, and Amaknak Island were all explored, with our avian highlights including the local forms of Rock Sandpiper, Pacific Wren, Grey-crowned Rosy Finch and Sooty Fox and Song Sparrows, as well as Belted Kingfisher, Buff-bellied Pipit, Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, Brambling, and Golden-crowned Sparrow.

A repeat of the first day's cruise took up our final day at Dutch Harbor and, although there was nothing new, we fully enjoyed getting more views of a stunning array of seabirds.

Thankfully our return flight to Anchorage departed as scheduled, and we arrived back on the mainland in the early afternoon. With little time available after checking-in to our hotel, we walked the shore of Lake Hood & Lake Spenard, where we enjoyed breeding-plumaged Red-necked Grebes, Downy Woodpecker and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Thoughts turned to our departure for Nome on the following morning.

All roads lead from Nome as they say, and we had more than three full days to explore the three major routes that lead out of town into quite different wilderness areas. The Council Road was the one that received most of our attention, as it passes alongside Safety Sound, one of Alaska's most famous birding hotspots. With action on both sides of the road (the sea on one side, the lagoons on the other), it was often slow going as we paused to check through the great numbers of birds present.



Bald Eagles with their young at the nest and Ancient Murrelet, Dutch Harbor (Craig Robson)



Cruising at Dutch Harbor, and Black-footed Albatross (Craig Robson)

On and around Safety Lagoon, good numbers of waterfowl included Pacific and Red-throated Loons, hundreds of Whistling Swans, a few Snow and Brant Geese (or Black Brants), a single King Eider, lots of Common Eiders, a few Buffleheads, a pair of Canvasbacks, many Sandhill Cranes, and small numbers of dainty Sabine's Gulls. Perhaps the main highlight, however, was the smart pair of Emperor Geese that stayed around long enough for us to connect with them. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for a distant male Spectacled Eider that we kept dipping on - that one would have to wait! There were numerous shorebirds, including plenty of staging flocks, and this year's highlights included Pacific Golden Plover, breeding Semipalmated Sandpipers, lots of nice Black Turnstones, a few Sanderlings and Bar-tailed Godwits, and even two locally rare Hudsonian Godwits. Glaucous Gulls were breeding in good numbers too. Along the beaches and around the small estuaries we found lovely Aleutian Terns that were starting to display and organise themselves, as well as the much commoner Arctic Terns. Passerines were limited in this exposed and stunted habitat, but the scrub and small trees harboured Grey-cheeked Thrush, Arctic and Common Redpolls, American Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, and Red Fox Sparrow. Further up the road towards council, we found our first Say's Phoebe, and Arctic Warblers, as well as a vocal Wandering Tattler that was breeding along the crystal-clear stream. A tip-off about Gyrfalcons nesting on one of the bridges was more than helpful, as we were able to scope the pair and their small young from a distance, without causing any disturbance. Several visits to the dump, closer to the outskirts of town, finally came up trumps with a couple of Vega Gulls, and the wider area moorlands were regularly patrolled by all three jaeger species.



Bristle-thighed Curlew (Craig Robson)

The remote Kougarok Road required a lengthy drive to reach the habitat of this regions' most famous breeding bird, the threatened Bristle-thighed Curlew. Our steady progress was halted briefly by a fantastic Canada Lynx that was sitting in the middle of the road studying a Snowshoe Hare. An early start was essential as, this is a busy time of year for tour groups, but fortunately, we were the only ones present at dawn. We had to slowly work our way up onto a hill-top via some difficult hummocky ground on what is essentially moorland, and not dissimilar to parts of the English or Scottish uplands. However, we hardly had to wait before we encountered our first curlew giving its distinctive territorial call and doing a bit of a display-flight. Over the next hour or so we succeeded in getting very satisfying views of this much sought-after species. Some spanking American Golden Plovers and Hudsonian Whimbrels were also around as usual. Slowly working back down the highway towards town, after our exploits at the curlew site, we prioritized the likes of Willow Ptarmigan and Bluethroat, obtaining some great views of both. Northern Harrier and Short-eared Owl both put in appearances, while the

numerous wetlands held Cackling Goose and breeding Wilson's Snipes and twirling Red-necked Phalaropes. One of the river crossings had our first breeding colony of American Cliff Swallows, and our first views of local scrub-dwelling passerines, such as Blackpoll Warbler, Northern Waterthrush and Golden-crowned and American Tree Sparrows. Several Alaskan Wagtails (the *tschutschensis* form of Eastern Yellow Wagtail) were briefly noted. Closer to town we spotted some wonderful Musk Ox up on a slope, looking very frisky and energetic. Musk Ox is native to Alaska but was extirpated by the 1920s. In 1930, 34 were captured in east Greenland and released in Alaska, and all of the animals in the state today are descended from them.

The Teller Road was the third of the roads leading from town and here, we made a big effort to try and find the mainland form of Rock Sandpiper but drew a blank unfortunately. During our search we did come across some superbly tame Rock Ptarmigan, a single Red Knot (which breeds locally), and some stunning breeding-plumaged Western Sandpipers. Early spring butterflies included the stunning Eversmann's Parnassian. The beginning of the road also brought our only Rusty Blackbirds of the tour.



American Three-toed Woodpecker on the outskirts of Anchorage (Craig Robson)

Returning to Anchorage once more, we picked up new rental vehicles and headed off south towards Seward the following morning. We left bright and early, for some pre-breakfast birding at Hillside Park, on the outskirts of town. A very busy and fruitful session brought us American Three-toed and Hairy Woodpeckers, Canada Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Varied, Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes, American Robin, Dark-eyed Junco and Myrtle Warbler. After an enjoyable sit-down breakfast at a popular local establishment, we continued onwards. Tern Lake had the usual breeding Common Loon and elegant Trumpeter Swans, and there were a handful of Ring-necked Ducks. The now customary dog-leg to Bear Creek brought the desired American Dipper and a couple of superb Townsend's Warblers. Closer to Seward, some feeders held Rufous Hummingbird, Pine Grosbeak and Pine Siskin, and at a nearby lake, there was a large family of Trumpeter Swans, singing Alder Flycatcher, and Lincoln's Sparrow. Down the coast at Lowell Point, we saw another Wandering Tattler and our first Chestnut-backed Chickadees.



The North-western Glacier, Kenai Fjords (Craig Robson)

The main reason for our visit to Seward was to explore the Kenai Fjords, and we boarded our vessel the following morning after breakfast for a full day cruise to the awesome North-western Glacier. Stunning scenery, fine weather, and the relatively small number of passengers meant that much of the nine hours was spent on deck. Seabirds were once more the main focus of our attentions, with three particular targets: Kittlitz's Murrelet and Rhinoceros and Parakeet Auklets. Three Kittlitz's showed well in the calm waters close to the glaciers, a couple of Parakeet Auklets were seen better than at Dutch Harbor, and we came up very close on some Rhinoceros Auklets. At the Chiswell Islands rows of Common Murres (or Guillemots) included a few nice Thick-billed Murres (or Brünnich's Guillemots). Tufted and Horned Puffins were present in impressive numbers, and all three species of cormorant were seen, including Red-faced on a nest. Other good birds were Harlequin Duck and Black Oystercatcher. Oceanic mammals were abundant. We had great views of Humpback and Killer Whales, as well as groups of Dall's Porpoise, a colony of Northern Sea-Lions, numerous ice-loafing Harbour Seals, and feeding Sea Otters. Two of our best mammals were not aquatic, however. First, we had great views of a mother and kid Mountain Goat and then, incredibly, a swimming American Black Bear, which we were able to watch until it reached the steep sloping rocks at the shoreline, very skilfully scaled the wet slabs, and then disappeared into the conifer woods. The stupendous glaciers were as impressive as ever, as we waited to watch chunks of ice break off and crash down into the still waters.

We returned to Anchorage via the Kenai Peninsula, but first we had a look at the coast south of town, where Marbled Murrelets were seen close inshore. Hidden Lake Campground in Kenai NWR was fairly productive. Our first Spruce Grouse was tantalisingly heard only, while Canada Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Varied Thrush all showed well.

The next day involved a very early start and a long drive, with some important stops, on our way up to the Denali region, and there were some great highlights along the way. Our first port of call was an area of boreal forest which had fairly recently been ravaged by fire. Fire is not all-bad in this habitat, and the aftermath was proving very popular with the surrounding woodpecker population. As we enjoyed our breakfasts, a Black-backed Woodpecker appeared and showed well for everyone, and there were a couple more American Three-toeds. Western Wood Pewee and Alder Flycatchers were also to be seen. Next, we headed up the Hatcher Pass road, to a spot where we had found White-tailed Ptarmigan on the previous tour. The road was relatively snow-free and, after parking in the same spot as four years earlier, we walked the relatively short distance up to a rocky area where a fantastic cocky male ptarmigan showed on the very same rock as four years previously!! There were few other birds at this elevation, though Golden Eagle and Golden-crowned Sparrow were noteworthy. On the drive back to the main highway, we were oh so fortunate to spot a superb male Spruce Grouse in the road. After parking up, we had stunning close-range views.



White-tailed Ptarmigan at Hatcher Pass (Craig Robson)

The next couple of days were spent exploring the Denali Highway, with us finishing-up at the historic Gakona Lodge and Trading Post. Two of our main targets in this stunningly beautiful region were the localised Smith's Longspur and the ever-pleasing Northern Hawk-Owl. We succeeded in finding both. The former after hiking across its 'blanket bog' breeding habitat, with a back-drop of snow-covered mountains and thawing lakes, and the latter in roadside Taiga, after we fortuitously bumped into another tour group that had just found it! A nice variety of other good birds were seen as well. Scanning some of the thousands of lakes and small wetlands that punctuate this vast and awe-inspiring landscape, we found Blue-winged Teal, lots of Buffleheads, White-winged Scoter, Barrow's Goldeneye, breeding plumaged Horned Grebes, and Lesser Yellowlegs. The conifer forests and Taiga brought more American Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers (their numbers

increased by the numerous dead White Spruce trees which have fallen victim to spruce beetle infestation), Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Bohemian Waxwing to name but a few.

From Gakona, we had a fairly leisurely, but all-day drive back to Anchorage with birding stops. We started off the day's birding at Tolsona, where the lake was particularly impressive, with several Surf Scoters amongst the many White-winged, and good numbers of both Bufflehead and Barrow's Goldeneye, which looked to be nesting in boxes around the lake. Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers and several tame Lesser Yellowlegs were also present, as was Northern Flicker. At Sheep Mountain Lodge we finally caught up with Thinhorn (or Dall) Sheep and there were more by the roadside further on. For those with a more diverse interest in natural history, our walk in the spring sunshine at the lodge was also marked by the number and variety of butterflies already on the wing.



Smith's Longspur (Craig Robson)

The next day saw us back at the airport, this time for the final leg of our epic journey to Barrow in the Arctic Circle. We arrived relatively late in the afternoon, picked up our vehicles, and began our exploration of the tundra and coast. It proved to be the right decision to have gone directly in search of the eiders, as this first evening brought our most memorable encounter, with a concentration of the three prime eider species together on thawing pools - 14 Steller's, 13 Spectacled and 22 King's! We never did see them as close and in such good numbers, all together, after that.

We had a couple of days to explore this amazing place and even with 24-hour daylight, it was hardly long enough!! The vast pack-ice still hugged the coastline but inland wetlands were beginning to thaw. We divided our time between driving the various roads as far as snow and water permitted and making regular trips towards the point to scan for Polar Bear (with no luck this year unfortunately). We also walked out across the tundra a bit, which is always fun, and checked a few sites around town for local vagrants. The many thawing pools and lakes held lots of Pacific Loons, Greater White-fronted Geese, numerous lovely Long-tailed Ducks and twirling Red and Red-necked Phalaropes. There were lots of other breeding shorebirds, with displaying Long-billed Dowitchers and Baird's Sandpipers being particularly noteworthy, and it was a good year for White-rumped Sandpiper, with some great close-ups. Numerous displaying Pectoral Sandpipers boomed their way

across the terrain in every direction and there were plenty Pomarine Jaegers searching for lemmings. It wasn't the best year for Snowy Owl, but we watched a pair that were breeding near the airport on a number of occasions. The commonest passerines at Barrow were Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting, the latter nicknamed 'Barrow Sparrow'. At some feeders in town, we also had some great close views of Arctic (or Hoary) and Common Redpolls side-by-side. Rarities this time included Gadwall, Little Stint, Tree Swallow, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher that took up residence in the cemetery, and a number of Arctic Warblers, though it was strange to see the latter hopping around on the ground. Other good birds at Barrow were several fly-over White-billed Divers, and a rather tame Black Guillemot. We also encountered our only Caribou of the tour here.

Another cancelled flight at the end of the trip meant that some of us were marooned at Barrow without transport for a couple of extra nights, but we were still able to re-unite in Anchorage for a farewell drink and toast a very successful tour of this wonderful state.



Sea ice at Barrow (Craig Robson)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

BIRDS

Total of bird species recorded: 189.

Brant Goose (Black Brant) *Branta [bernicia] nigricans*

Canada Goose (Lesser C G) *Branta [canadensis] parvipes* Supposedly the common form around Anchorage.

Cackling Goose (Taverner's C G) *Branta [hutchinsii] taverneri* Small numbers in the region of Nome.

Emperor Goose *Chen canagica* Flock of c.20 briefly at Dutch Harbor; then a confiding pair at Safety Lagoon, Nome.



One of the Emperor Geese at Safety Lagoon (Craig Robson)

Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens* Only a dozen or so at Nome, but many still at Barrow.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus buccinator* More than 30 at widespread inland locations. Nests and young noted.

Tundra Swan (Whistling S) *Cygnus [columbianus] columbianus* Large numbers at Nome (600+); a few at Barrow.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* A pair along the Denali Highway.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Gadwall *Anas strepera* A pair at Barrow were unexpected, and a local rarity.

American Wigeon *Anas americana*

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* Two at Dutch Harbor, perhaps with the suggestion of some hybrid genes.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* A pair on Safety Lagoon.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* Just six noted en route to Seward.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* The commonest scaup, and one of the most frequently recorded species on the tour.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* At least 17 of these beauties at Barrow, with some excellent views.

Spectacled Eider *Somateria fischeri* Much anticipated, with 20+ at Barrow, and some very nice looks also.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* The king indeed! One at Safety Lagoon, Nome, and then 30+ at Barrow.

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* Dutch Harbor, Nome and Barrow (*v-nigra*).

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* Always a pleasure.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* Just two males and a female at Tolsona Lake.

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi* A pair along the Denali Highway, and at least 50 at Tolsona Lake.

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* Just small numbers at Safety Lagoon.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* A lovely sight (and sound), especially in the Arctic tundra.
Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* A few at Nome and many along the Denali Highway.
Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*
Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* Best seen at Tolsona Lake (40+), where they evidently breed.
Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*
Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*
White-tailed Ptarmigan *Lagopus leucura* An amazing cocky male at Hatcher Pass.
Willow Ptarmigan (W Grouse) *Lagopus lagopus* Three in the Nome region.
Rock Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta* At least three seen in the Nome area.
Spruce Grouse *Falcipennis canadensis* A superb male on the Hatcher Pass road. Heard at Hidden Lake.
Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* Two males and a female noted near Seward.
Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*
Sandhill Crane *Antigone canadensis* Scattered sightings, but most frequently seen near Nome.
Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*
Horned Grebe (Slavonian G) *Podiceps auritus* Four or five along the Denali Highway.



Rock Sandpiper on Unalaska Island (Craig Robson)

Black Oystercatcher (American B O) *Haematopus bachmani* Frequently seen Dutch Harbor; 2 Kenai Fjords cruise.
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Many sightings around Nome, where they breed in coastal areas.
American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Great views inland from Nome and in the Barrow area.
Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*
Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis* A pair seen very well at the usual location near Nome.
Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus* Small numbers breeding near Nome.
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Nine at Nome, where they are a bit of a speciality.
Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* Two were unexpected near Nome, and there were two back in Anchorage.
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala* At least three at Safety Sound.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* One on its breeding grounds near Nome.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Plenty of 'Pacific' Dunlins were recorded at Nome and again at Barrow where they breed.

Rock Sandpiper *Calidris ptilocnemis* Up to 30 at Dutch Harbor (nominate).

Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* Display-fighting bird seen by all at Barrow. Also, a pair at the cemetery during our delay.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* A single bird seen well at Barrow.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* Two at Dutch Harbor and 2 near Nome.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* Three or four seen very well at Barrow. A good year for them.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* An abundant breeder at Barrow. Amazing display-flight.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* One of the commonest breeders at Nome and Barrow.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* In the Nome area only, including 100s at Safety Lagoon.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Just two at Barrow. Surprisingly scarce this year.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Red Phalarope (Grey P) *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* One, all too briefly, at Tolsona Lake

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana* Scattered sightings and some good views.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*



Red Phalarope (Craig Robson)

Black-legged Kittiwake (Pacific K) *Rissa [tridactyla] pollicaris*

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* A handful at Safety Sound and two more at Barrow.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* Three at Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

Short-billed Gull (Mew G) *Larus brachyrhynchus*

Glaucous-winged Gull *L. glaucescens* Dutch Harbor & Seward. Mostly hybrids ('Cook Inlet Gull') in Anchorage area.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* Very common around Nome and Barrow.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

Vega Gull *Larus vegae* Just two near Nome.

Aleutian Tern *Onychoprion aleuticus* We enjoyed brilliant views of many that were preparing to breed near Nome.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Pomarine Jaeger (P Skua) *Stercorarius pomarinus* Particularly common on the tundra at Barrow.

Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus*



Rhinoceros Auklet and Pigeon Guillemots (Craig Robson)

Long-tailed Jaeger (L-t Skua) *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Thick-billed Murre (Brünnich's Guillemot) *Uria lomvia* 14+ at Dutch Harbor and 10+ during the Seward cruise.

Common Murre (C Guillemot) *Uria aalge*

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle* Easily seen at Barrow this year, but just the one.

Pigeon Guillemot *C. columba* Over 200 during the first Dutch Harbor cruise; much smaller numbers in Seward area.

Marbled Murrelet *Brachyramphus marmoratus* Small numbers at Dutch Harbor & Seward; commoner at the former.

Kittlitz's Murrelet *Brachyramphus brevirostris* 8 Dutch Harbor & 3 on Kenai Fjords cruise; one of the specialties.

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* 800+ estimated on our 2nd Dutch Harbor cruise; 30 Kenai Fjords.

Cassin's Auklet *Ptychoramphus aleuticus* 26 logged at Dutch Harbor and seen at close range.



Cassin's Auklets at the Baby Islands, Dutch Harbor (Craig Robson)

Parakeet Auklet *Aethia psittacula* Two Dutch Harbour, and two during the Kenai Fjords cruise.

Whiskered Auklet *Aethia pygmaea* Probably c.100 of these superb little auklets around the Baby Is., Dutch Harbor.

Crested Auklet *Aethia cristatella* At least 15 during the Dutch Harbor cruises.

Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata* Just three in the Kenai Fjords, but excellent views.

Horned Puffin *Fratercula corniculata* Great views of this and the next species at Dutch Harbor and the Kenai Fjords.

Tufted Puffin *Fratercula cirrhata* 4000+ estimated during our first Dutch Harbor cruise.

Red-throated Loon (R-t Diver) *Gavia stellata*

Pacific Loon (P Diver) *Gavia pacifica* Quite common and widespread.

Common Loon (Great Northern Diver) *Gavia immer* Scattered, with nine logged.

Yellow-billed Loon (White-b Diver) *Gavia adamsii* A total of 11 at Barrow, but all in flight.

Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis* At least 30 at very close range during our Dutch Harbor cruises.

Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes* 3-4 at Dutch.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Short-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna tenuirostris* Over 4000 estimated near the Chelan Banks, Dutch Harbor.

Red-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax urile* 12 at Dutch Harbor and 3 during the Seward cruise.

Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Western Osprey *Pandion* One en route to Seward.
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* Just a handful noted this year.
Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* Just one in Anchorage.
Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius* Widespread in suitable habitat.
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
Rough-legged Buzzard (R-I Hawk) *Buteo lagopus* (NL) Just one noted at Girdwood.
Northern Hawk-Owl *Surnia ulula* It was a massive relief to finally catch up with this one along the Denali Highway.
Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* An unexceptional year, with just three in the Nome area.
Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* Just a single male at Barrow this year, but well appreciated!
Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon* Our first, at Dutch Harbor was unexpected; another near Seward.
American Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides dorsalis* Best year ever, with 14 logged.
Black-backed Woodpecker *Picoides arcticus* Ditto, with 5 logged. Seen for the first time along the Denali Highway.
Downy Woodpecker *Dryobates pubescens*
Hairy Woodpecker (Eastern H W) *Leuconotopicus villosus*
Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* A male at Tolsona Lake.
Merlin *Falco columbarius* A couple of sightings along the Denali Highway.
Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* Near Nome: pair scoped at nest with 2+ young Council Rd., another pair Kougark Rd.
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Two at the Baby Is, Dutch Harbor, and one at Barrow.
Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya*
Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus cooperi* One finally popped-up along the Denali Highway; another heard.
Western Wood Pewee *Contopus sordidulus*
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher *Empidonax flaviventris* Great views of one on multiple occasions in Barrow Cemetery.
Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum* Several seen - we were usually alerted by the distinctive voice.
Great Grey Shrike (Northern S) *Lanius excubitor* (NL) Just one, very briefly, along the Kougark Rd. Nome.
Canada Jay (Northern Grey J) *Perisoreus canadensis* Occasional in the boreal forests.
Black-billed Magpie *Pica hudsonia*
American Crow (North-western C) *Corvus [brachyrhynchos] caurinus*
Northern Raven (Common R) *Corvus corax*
Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* Six along the Denali Highway to Glenallen.
Chestnut-backed Chickadee *Poecile rufescens* Three near Seward.
Boreal Chickadee *Poecile hudsonicus* Several encounters in the boreal forests.
Black-capped Chickadee *Poecile atricapillus*
Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*
Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*
Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina* Small numbers noted on a few occasions.
American Cliff Swallow (Cliff S) *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* At scattered breeding locations, mostly bridges.
Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* Around Nome, and along the Denali Highway. Race *kennicotti*.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Corthylio calendula*
Pacific Wren *Troglodytes pacificus* Just one seen and another heard at Dutch Harbor. East Aleutian *petrophilus*.
Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*
Brown Creeper *Certhia americana* A couple in Kincaid Park, Anchorage.
Common Starling (introduced) (European S) *Sturnus vulgaris*
Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius* We enjoyed excellent views of this real stunner on several occasions.
Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* Regularly found in the interior.
Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* Somewhat scarcer than the last species. Subspecies *nanus*.
Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* Common around Nome and along the Denali Highway.
American Robin *Turdus migratorius*
Bluethroat (Red-spotted B) *Luscinia svecica* Good views of three males along the Kougark Road, Nome.
American Dipper *Cinclus mexicanus* Just one at Bear Creek, near Seward.
Eastern Yellow Wagtail (Alaskan W) *Motacilla [tschutschensis] tschutschensis* Several around Nome.
Buff-bellied Pipit (American P) *Anthus rubescens* Small numbers at Dutch Harbor and around Nome.
Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* Two different birds were noted at Sitka Spruce Park, Dutch Harbor.
Pine Grosbeak (American P G) *Pinicola [enucleator] leucura* Just one near Seward.
Grey-crowned Rosy Finch (Grey-faced R F) *Leucosticte [tephrocotis] griseonucha* Dutch Harbor (bulky *umbrina*).

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* Fairly common and very widespread.

Arctic Redpoll (Hoary R) *Carduelis hornemanni* Subspecies *exilipes* was occasional around Nome and Barrow.

Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* A pair at Sitka Spruce Park, Dutch Harbor.

Pine Siskin *Spinus pinus* At least five at Sitka Spruce Park, Dutch Harbor, and a couple near Seward.

Lapland Longspur (L Bunting) *Calcarius lapponicus* Abundant on tundra.

Smith's Longspur *Calcarius pictus* Great close views of a super male near Paxson. Beautiful bird.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* Otherwise known as the Barrow Sparrow.

Sooty Fox Sparrow *P. unalaschensis* Many sightings: *unalaschensis* at Dutch; *sinuosa* Seward to Anchorage.

Red Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca* Common around Nome, and Denali-Paxson. Rich song.

American Tree Sparrow *Spizelloides arborea* Around Nome and the Denali Highway.

Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-coloured J) *Junco hyemalis*

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Golden-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia atricapilla* Around Nome and higher levels of interior. One at Dutch Harbor.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* Widespread *anthinus*.

Song Sparrow (Pacific S S) *Melospiza [melodia] rufina* Subspecies *sanaka* on Unalaska I; *kenaiensis* near Seward.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii* One in Anchorage and two near Seward.

Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus* Four along the beginning of the Teller Road. Declining.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis* Widespread and often heard. A few seen well.

Orange-crowned Warbler *Leiothlypis celata* Widespread.

American Yellow Warbler (Northern Y W) *Setophaga aestiva* Surprisingly widespread this far north.

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata* Seen well, but often only heard giving its high-pitched insect-like song.

Myrtle Warbler *Setophaga coronata*

Townsend's Warbler *Setophaga townsendi* Several stunners in the Seward-Kenai Peninsula area.

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla* Another colourful warbler. A little skulking, but many good looks.



Snow Bunting (Craig Robson)

MAMMALS

Total of mammal species recorded: 27.

Canada Lynx (Canadian L) *Lynx canadensis* One was sitting in the road staring at a Snowshoe Hare, Kougarak Rd.

Arctic Fox *Vulpes lagopus* Several seen on Unalaska I.

American Black Bear (Black B) *Ursus americanus* It was amazing to see one swimming in the ocean near Seward.

Steller Sea Lion *Eumetopias jubatus* 30 at Dutch Harbor and 40+ during the Kenai Fjords cruise.

Spotted Seal (Largha S) *Phoca largha* Just one at Nome.

Common (Harbour S) *Phoca vitulina* 100+ on ice off Northwestern Glacier.

Sea Otter *Enhydra lutris* Good views of many at Dutch Harbor and the Kenai Fjords near Seward.

Northern American Otter (Northern River O) *Lutra canadensis* Two during the Seward cruise.

Elk (Moose) *Alces alces* Up to 30 of these impressive beasts this year, with some neat youngsters too.

Reindeer (Caribou) *Rangifer tarandus* Just one at Barrow.

Mountain Goat *Oreamnos americanus* Five at Beluga Point and five in the Seward area.

Musk Ox *Ovibos moschatus* c.50 in total near Nome. Amazing beasts.

Thinhorn Sheep (Dall S) *Ovis dalli* 13 noted during the drive from Gakona to Anchorage.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* 1 briefly at Dutch Harbor, then 4 during the Kenai Fjords cruise.

Killer Whale (Orca) *Orcinus orca* 12-15 during our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

Harbor Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* One at Dutch Harbor.

Dall's Porpoise *Phocoenoides dalli* 15 or so in speedy groups around the fjords, near Seward.

Snowshoe Hare *Lepus americanus* Ten in the Nome area and one en route to Denali.

Collared Pika *Ochotona collaris* One at Hatcher Pass, on the same rocks as the White-tailed Ptarmigan.

North American Porcupine *Erithizon dorsatum* One was treed in the Denali area.

Hoary Marmot *Marmota caligata* One scoped near Hatcher Pass.

American Red Squirrel (Red S) *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*

Arctic Ground Squirrel (A Souslik) *Urocitellus parryi* Common, especially around Nome and Denali.

American Beaver *Castor canadensis* (NL) One along the Kougarak Road.

Root Vole (Tundra V) *Microtus oeconomus* One at Denali.

Brown Lemming *Lemmus trimucronatus* Several at Barrow.

Muskrat *Ondata zibethicus* One at Westchester Lagoon.



Sea Otter (Craig Robson)



American Black Bear, Mountain Goat, and Musk Ox (Craig Robson)

APPENDIX 2 - Other fauna & flora recorded

BUTTERFLIES

Total of butterfly species recorded: 11.

Eversmann's Parnassian (Alaskan P) *Parnassius eversmanni thor* Several along the Teller Road.

Canadian Tiger Swallowtail *Papilio canadensis* Widespread.

Hecla Sulphur *Colias hecla* Sheep Mountain Lodge.

Arctic White *Pieris angelika* Widespread, e.g., Tern Lake car park.

Western Tailed Blue *Cupido amyntula* Sheep Mountain Lodge.

Silvery Blue *Glaucopsyche lygdamus couperi* Sheep Mountain Lodge.

Greenish Blue (Kodiak B) *Icaricia saepiolus amica* Sheep Mountain Lodge.

Freija Fritillary *Boloria freija* In the blanket bog at the Smith's Longspur site at least.

Hoary Comma *Polygonia gracilis* One at Hidden Lake Campground, Kenai.

Ross's Alpine *Erebia rossii* In the blanket bog at the Smith's Longspur site.

White-veined Arctic *Oeneis bore* Widespread, e.g., Teller Road, Sheep Mountain Lodge.



Eversmann's Parnassian near Nome (Craig Robson)

DRAGONFLIES

Total of dragonfly species recorded: 8.

Lake Darner *Aeshna eremita* Lake Spenard & Hood.

Northern Spreadwing *Lestes disjunctus* Lake Spenard & Hood.

Northern Bluet *Enallagma annexum* Abundant at Lake Spenard & Hood.

Taiga Bluet *Coenagrion resolutum* Lake Spenard & Hood.

Four-spotted Chaser (F-s Skimmer) *Libellula quadrimaculata* Lake Spenard & Hood etc.

Boreal Whiteface *Leucorrhinia borealis* Lake Spenard & Hood, Tolsona Lake Campground.

Hudsonian Whiteface *Leucorrhinia hudsonica* Lake Spenard & Hood.

Belted Whiteface *Leucorrhinia proxima* Lake Spenard & Hood.



Clockwise from top left: Belted Whiteface, Boreal Whiteface and Hudsonian Whiteface (Craig Robson)

PLANTS

Wood Horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum*

Black Spruce *Picea mariana*

White Spruce *Picea glauca*

Hare's-tail Cottongrass (Tufted C) *Eriophorum vaginatum*

Blue Flag Iris *Iris setosa*

Cow Parsnip *Heracleum lanatum*

Frigid Colt's-foot *Petasites frigidus*

Mountain Alder *Alnus crispa* Surely one of the commonest trees/shrubs in Alaska.

Dwarf Birch *Betula nana*

Bluebells *Mertensia paniculata*

Arctic Scurvygrass (A Spoonwort) *Cochlearia [officinalis] arctica*

Canadian Dwarf Cornel (C Dogwood) *Cornus canadensis*

Swedish Dwarf Cornel *Cornus suecica*

Bog-rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*

Crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*

Lapland Rhododendron *Rhododendron lapponicum*

Bog Bilberry (B Blueberry) *Vaccinium uliginosum*

Arctic Lupine *Lupinus arcticus*

Wild Geranium *Geranium erianthum*

Bogbean (Buckbean) *Menyanthes trifoliata*

Yellow Pond-lily *Nuphar polysepalum*

Snow Buttercup *Ranunculus nivalis* Barrow etc.

Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala*

Shrubby Cinquefoil *Potentilla fruticosa*

Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*

Cloudberry *Rubus chamemorous*

Balsam Poplar *Populus balsamifera*

Quaking Aspen *Populus tremuloides*

Woolly Lousewort *Pedicularis lanata* Barrow etc.

Northern Coralroot *Corallorhiza trifida* Tolsona Lake Campground.

Keyflower *Dactylorhiza aristata* Several spots on Unalaska Island.

Fairy-slipper *Calypso bulbosa* Tolsona Lake Campground.



Woolly Lousewort at Barrow (Craig Robson)



Scenic lake near Seward, and the group at Dutch Harbor (Craig Robson)