



ALASKA TOUR REPORT 2023

25 May - 16 June 2023

BY CRAIG ROBSON

Our 2023 tour to the land of the midnight sun, including Dutch Harbor, St. Paul Island, Nome, Kenai, the Denali Highway and Barrow was thankfully completed without a single hitch or cancellation. A late spring affected a number of our target species but did not stop us from seeing a fantastic selection of birds and other wildlife. Some of the highlights among our total of 192 bird species included: all three species of Ptarmigan, the much-wanted Spectacled, Steller's and King Eiders, Black Oystercatcher, Black Turnstone, Rock Sandpiper, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Red-legged Kittiwake, Sabine's Gull, Aleutian Tern, Marbled, Kittlitz's and Ancient Murrelets, Parakeet, Least, Whiskered, Crested, Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets, Horned and Tufted Puffins, Laysan Albatross, Red-faced Cormorant, Snowy Owl, American Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, Gyrfalcon, Chestnut-backed and Boreal Chickadees, Pacific Wren, Varied Thrush, Pine Grosbeak, 'Grey-faced' Rosy Finch, Two-barred Crossbill, Smith's Longspur, and Sooty Fox Sparrow. There were many North American rarities this year, with Stejneger's Scoter, 'Siberian' Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Vega Gull, Eyebrowed Thrush, Siberian Rubythroat, Taiga Flycatcher, Grey Wagtail, Brambling, Hawfinch, Common Rosefinch, and Rustic Bunting, as well as east Asian outpost-breeders in the form of Black-throated Loon, Red-necked Stint, Bluethroat, and Eastern Yellow (or Alaskan) and White (or East Siberian) Wagtails. We also found 22 species of mammal, the cream of the crop being Polar Bear and Beluga, followed by Northern Fur Seal, Humpback and Killer Whales, numerous Moose, and the hulking great Musk Ox. It was a very late spring in 2023, and temperatures were much lower than 2022 at most of the places that we visited. We had a good deal of cold and wet weather, which made finding some of the target birds more of a challenge. Extensive sea-ice was present for the first time at Nome, during this tour.

For the second year running, the pretour extension to Dutch Harbor commenced at the check-in counter for the outbound flight. After last year's cancellations, it was an enormous relief to arrive at Unalaska Airport as scheduled! After checking-in to our comfortable hotel, we drove around in search of what interesting local birds and wildlife we could find, starting at Sitka National Historic Park (Alaska's smallest), a tiny plantation and local migrant-trap. Unalaska Lake, Summer Bay Road, and Humpy Cove were all explored, with our avian highlights including the local forms of Rock Sandpiper, Pacific Wren, Grey-faced Rosy Finch (a potential split from Grey-crowned), and Sooty Fox and Song Sparrows, as well as Eurasian Teal, lots of Black Oystercatchers, Buff-bellied Pipit, Pine Siskin, and Golden-crowned Sparrow. Our second day saw us at sea in the capable hands of Captain Jimmer. With a weather window in our favor, we headed straight to the Baby Islands, where we were lucky enough to see several vocalizing 'swarms' of Whiskered Auklets, totally around 1500 individuals. A small number of scarce Cassin's Auklets and Kittlitz's Murrelets (en route) were also

appreciated, as were something like 2000 Ancient Murrelets. Heading towards the Chelan Banks, the weather and sea condition deteriorated, and we had to head directly back to Dutch Harbor. Luckily, a single Laysan Albatross passed close by as we returned. Our last (spare) day at Dutch was spent exploring various locations for anything we could find that was new. The weather was very poor, and we thanked our lucky stars that we had managed to do a pelagic trip at all!

It was a relief when our return flight to Anchorage left and landed on time. At our hotel, we met up with the rest of the group members to discuss our visit to St. Paul Island the following day. Another timely departure saw us landing on this isolated Pribilof island on time, after refueling at the remote outpost of Bethel. We had the best part of three days to explore the island, in the capable hands of guides Sulli Gibson, Luis Gles and Mariah Hryniewich. Seabirds at their nesting cliffs are one of the main draws for birders, and we enjoyed great views of the likes of Red-legged Kittiwake, Parakeet, Least, and Crested Auklets, Horned and Tufted Puffins, and Red-faced Cormorant, amongst the more numerous 'Pacific' Black-legged Kittiwakes and Common and Brünnich's Guillemots. Landbird highlights included the numerous Rock Sandpipers and 'Grey-faced' (or Grey-crowned) Rosy Finches, Short-eared Owl, and the local form of Pacific Wren. Spring migration was in full swing and our visit coincided with an interesting variety of east Asian vagrants, such as Red-necked Stint, 'Siberian' Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Eyebrowed Thrush, Siberian Rubythroat, Taiga Flycatcher, Grey Wagtail, Brambling, Hawfinch, Common Rosefinch, and Rustic Bunting. Mammal-wise, Northern Fur Seals and Arctic Foxes were very entertaining, and we even met with the islands introduced herd of Caribou.

Messaged news of our return flight to Anchorage being cancelled turned out to be a bizarre technical error, and once again our flight departed in a timely manner and returned us on time. The next day saw us exploring a number of locations in the Anchorage area, including Lake Hood & Lake Spenard, Westchester Lagoon, Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, and Kincaid Park. The weather was very poor and unseasonably cold, so highlights were rather few: breeding Trumpeter Swans and Red-necked Grebes, a range of waterfowl including Barrow's Goldeneye and White-winged Scoter, tame Sandhill Cranes and Short-billed Dowitchers, Common Loon (Great Northern Diver), Belted Kingfisher, Violet-green Swallow, Swainson's Thrush, Sooty Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows, and Orange-crowned, American Yellow and Wilson's Warblers.

We flew to Nome the next morning with thoughts of better things to come. As we landed we were surprised to see large amounts of inshore sea-ice, normally unheard of this late in the season. 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. Despite the unseasonal weather and late snow, good numbers of waterfowl were present, including many Pacific and Red-throated Loons, Tundra Swans, 'Black' Brant Geese, Sandhill Cranes, and a mix of gulls, including plenty of Vega and a couple of Sabine's. Shorebird numbers were poor but we managed a couple Black Turnstones and Red Knot. An unexpected male Spectacled Eider was scoped with some of the resident Common Eiders. At Cape Nome we spent some time scanning for scoters and we were pleased to spot a couple of rare east Asian Stejneger's Scoters, tagging along with the more expected White-winged's. At the Nome River mouth we scoped Aleutian Terns setting up a breeding colony, and there were regular sightings of superb Long-tailed Jaegers. Passerines were limited in the exposed habitat, but the willow scrub and small trees harbored Grey-cheeked Thrush, Arctic and Common Redpolls, Northern Waterthrush, American Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, and Red Fox Sparrow. These are some very hardy little birds!

The remote Kougarok Road required a lengthy drive to reach the habitat of this regions' most famous breeding bird, the threatened Bristle-thighed Curlew. 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 half hour or so we succeeded in getting satisfying views of this much sought-after species. Slowly working back down the graded road towards town, after our exploits at the curlew site, we had more time to appreciate the numerous Willow Ptarmigan and Snowshoe Hares that we had passed on the way out, and we added several unexpected Rock Ptarmigans (lower than normal at this time), Cackling Goose, Tundra Swan, singing Bluethroats, an unexpected Varied Thrush, breeding colonies of American Cliff Swallows, Rusty Blackbird, our first Blackpoll Warbler, and super views of Golden-crowned and American Tree Sparrows. Golden Eagle and Gyrfalcon were scoped rather distantly at their nests and Rough-legged Buzzard put-in an appearance. Plenty of Moose were also to be seen, including a mother with a small calf.

The hills and rolling country surrounding the town brought us some close-up views of the wonderful Musk Ox. It 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 is the third of the roads leading from town, but this year we only visited the first few kilometers, where we found American Dipper at its nest, and displaying 'Alaskan' (Eastern) Yellow Wagtail. Nome town and harbor held some additional interest, with Harlequin Ducks, Black-throated Loon, twirling Red-necked and Red Phalaropes, Sabine's Gull, breeding 'East Siberian' (White) Wagtails, and an unexpected American Beaver.

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. Another very quiet birding session was only highlighted by a pair of Boreal Chickadees and a small number of excellent

Two-barred (or White-winged) Crossbills. After a traditional breakfast, we headed straight to our hotel in Seward, through rather windy and wild weather. A brief stop at a gusty Beluga Point brought us some good scope views of a small number of Thinhorn (or Dall) Sheep, including some excellent rams. A couple of Wandering Tattlers on the rocks were a bonus. After lunch we visited some feeders and then some coastal forest south of town. A nice selection of birds included Marbled Murrelets and Pigeon Guillemots just offshore, amazing little Rufous Hummingbirds, tame 'Coastal' Steller's Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Hermit Thrush, Pine Siskin, and a superb male Townsend's Warbler.

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 Northwestern Glacier. The weather was somewhat challenging once more, but it did not stop most of us from enjoying the stunning scenery and some wonderful seabirds and cetaceans. Four Kittlitz's Murrelets showed well in the calm waters not far from the glacier, after a couple of Parakeet Auklets were seen on the outward journey, as well as two Rhinoceros Auklets by Granite Island. We had really fantastic views of Killer Whales, which even came under the boat, as well as Humpback Whales and dashing Dall's Porpoises. Thousands of miniature icebergs in the still waters leading up to the awe-inspiring blue-hewed glaciers were dotted with numerous Common (or Harbour) Seals. At the Chiswell Islands there were rows of Common and Thick-billed Murres (Common and Brünnich's Guillemots) on the ledges, as well as Tufted and Horned Puffins, and all three species of cormorant. Other good birds were a flock of 45 or so Surf Scoters, and a Black Oystercatcher.

Next day, we returned to Anchorage via the Kenai Peninsula where, around Hidden Lake Campground in Kenai NWR, we enjoyed tame Canada Jays, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Varied Thrush, and several excellent 'American' Pine Grosbeaks.

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 then along the Denali Highway to our accommodation at Maclaren River Lodge. Our first port of call was Sockeye Burn, an area of boreal forest which was ravaged by fire a few years ago. Fire is not all-bad in this habitat, and the aftermath has provided good habitat for woodpeckers. A relatively short stomp-around soon turned up territorial males of both Black-backed and American Three-toed Woodpeckers. Alder Flycatchers were also much in evidence. Next, we headed up the Hatcher Pass road, to a spot where we had found White-tailed Ptarmigan on our previous two tours. The road was snow-free and, after parking in our usual spot, we walked the relatively short distance up to a rocky area where a male ptarmigan showed atop a rock and was studied through the scope. There were few other highlights along the way to the lodge, and we experienced more wet and windy conditions. After a hearty breakfast the following morning, we hiked out across 'blanket bog', with a back-drop of snow-covered mountains and thawing lakes – habitat for the much-wanted Smith's Longspur. A singing male was fortunately soon located and we all enjoyed great views of this stunner. Our only other 'official' birding stop was at Tolsona Lake, where we enjoyed some great views of Horned (or Slavonian) Grebe, and Surf and White-winged Scoters on their breeding grounds. We arrived back in Anchorage in time for dinner.

The following day, we had a few hours to bird around Anchorage again, before our flight north to Barrow. Birds were few, but there was a major mammal highlight in the form of ten or so Belugas that swam close inshore as we scanned from the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and later, at Earthquake Park. Totally unexpected here, and a delight to see. The final leg of our epic journey began with our late afternoon arrival in Barrow, on the Arctic coast. We picked up our vehicles, and began our exploration of the tundra and coast. It proved to be the right decision, as our only two Steller's Eiders of the trip, a pair, were seen on a roadside lagoon. Further on, we enjoyed much closer views of Spectacled and King Eiders than we had managed earlier during the trip. 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. There were recent sightings of bears, so very early the next morning we went down to an area where some 'food' had been put out by the locals a few days earlier. Finally, after a lot of scanning, a single Polar Bear was spotted quite distantly, but there were some good scope views before it disappeared behind huge chunks of ice. The many thawing pools and lakes held lots of Pacific Loons, Greater White-fronted Geese, numerous lovely Long-tailed Ducks and Red and Red-necked Phalarope. Numerous displaying Pectoral Sandpipers boomed their way across the tundra in every direction and there were plenty Pomarine Jaegers searching for lemmings. It was a good year for Snowy Owl, with some amazing close-up views of both sexes. The commonest passerines at Barrow were Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting, the latter nicknamed 'Barrow Sparrow'. Rarities this time included Least Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, and Varied Thrush. Other good birds at Barrow were displaying Baird's Sandpipers, and Black Guillemot near its nest.

Back in Anchorage for the last time, we enjoyed a late farewell dinner, and drank a toast to a successful tour of this wonderful state.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

BIRDS

Brant Goose ◊ [Black Brant] *Branta [bernicla] nigricans*

Canada Goose ◊ [Lesser C G] *Branta [canadensis] parvipes*

Cackling Goose ◊ [Taverner's C G] *Branta [hutchinsii] taverneri*

Snow Goose ◊ *Anser caerulescens* Three on St. Paul and 50 or so at Barrow.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Trumpeter Swan ◊ *Cygnus buccinator* Only six or so noted this year, with some on nests.

Tundra Swan ◊ *Cygnus [columbianus] columbianus*

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* A few on St Paul and a male seen by Rod and Bruno at Maclaren River Lodge.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana*

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* Two at Dutch Harbor, and small numbers on St. Paul.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* A male in Anchorage.

Redhead *Aythya americana* Several seen in Anchorage this year.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* One in Anchorage and five at Tolsona Lake.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

Spectacled Eider ◊ *Somateria fischeri* Males on St. Paul and at Nome, and then best seen at Barrow (17 logged).

Steller's Eider ◊ *Polysticta stelleri* Just a pair at Barrow this year.

King Eider ◊ *Somateria spectabilis* The king indeed! Good numbers seen well on St. Paul, Nome and Barrow.

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

Harlequin Duck ◊ *Histrionicus histrionicus* Always a pleasure.

Surf Scoter ◊ *Melanitta perspicillata*

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi*

Stejneger's Scoter ◊ *Melanitta stejnegeri* 2-3 off Cape Nome. Sightings have increased in recent years here.

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana*

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

Bufflehead ◊ *Bucephala albeola* A few at St. Paul, and Tolsona Lake.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Barrow's Goldeneye ◊ *Bucephala islandica* Easily seen in Anchorage and Tolsona Lake etc.

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

White-tailed Ptarmigan ◊ *Lagopus leucura* A single male at Hatcher Pass.

Willow Ptarmigan ◊ (W Grouse) *Lagopus [lagopus] lagopus* At least 30 in the Nome region (*alascensis*).

Rock Ptarmigan ◊ *Lagopus muta* Four seen well along the Kougarok Road, Nome.

Rufous Hummingbird ◊ *Selasphorus rufus* Two or three near Seward, with smart males.

Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*

Sandhill Crane *Antigone canadensis* Most were seen near Nome, where we counted over 50.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* Several occupied nests in Anchorage, where it is common.

Horned Grebe (Slavonian G) *Podiceps auritus* Just two at Tolsona Lake.

Black Oystercatcher ◊ (American B O) *Haematopus bachmani* Many at Dutch Harbor; 1 Kenai Fjords cruise.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Bristle-thighed Curlew ◊ *Numenius tahitiensis* Two seen very well at the usual location near Nome.

Eurasian Whimbrel [Siberian W] *Numenius [phaopus] variegatus* One seen well on St. Paul.

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus* Small numbers breeding near Nome.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Black Turnstone ◊ *Arenaria melanocephala* Two at Safety Sound.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* Six in breeding plumage at Safety Sound.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Amazing close views of one in full breeding plumage on St. Paul.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Plenty of the 'Pacific' *arctica* form at Nome, and again at Barrow where they breed.

Rock Sandpiper ◊ *Calidris ptilocnemis* Dutch Harbor (*couesi*), and St. Paul (n nominate).

Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* A courting pair at Barrow.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

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*

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Just a few at Barrow.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* Great views of a pair at Westchester Lagoon.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Red Phalarope ◊ (Grey P) *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* One on St. Paul.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

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

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* A total of four on St. Paul.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

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

Red-legged Kittiwake ◊ *Rissa brevirostris* One of the highlights of our visit to St. Paul.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* Four noted at Nome.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* Many in Anchorage this year with max. 37 noted.

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

Glaucous-winged Gull ◊ *Larus glaucescens*

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

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

Vega Gull ♦ *Larus vegae* Easily seen on St. Paul and Nome this year; 11 logged.

Aleutian Tern ♦ *Onychoprion aleuticus* We enjoyed scope views of birds that were preparing to breed near Nome.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Pomarine Jaeger (P Skua) *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus*

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

Thick-billed Murre ♦ (Brünnich's Guillemot) *Uria lomvia*

Common Murre (C Guillemot) *Uria aalge*

Black Guillemot ♦ *Cepphus grylle* One at Barrow, where it was nesting by a culvert.

Pigeon Guillemot ♦ *Cepphus columba* Many at Dutch Harbor; smaller numbers in Seward area.

Marbled Murrelet ♦ *Brachyramphus marmoratus* 120+ at Dutch Harbor; smaller numbers in Seward area.

Kittlitz's Murrelet ♦ *Brachyramphus brevirostris* 11 Dutch Harbor & 4 on Kenai Fjords cruise; one of the specialties.

Ancient Murrelet ♦ *Synthliboramphus antiquus* 2000 estimated at Dutch; pair St. Paul; three Kenai Fjords.

Cassin's Auklet ♦ *Ptychoramphus aleuticus* 15 logged at Dutch Harbor, and seen at close range.

Parakeet Auklet ♦ *Aethia psittacula* One Dutch Harbour; numerous breeders St. Paul; two Kenai Fjords cruise.

Least Auklet ♦ *Aethia pusilla* Nice to touch-base again with this common St. Paul breeder.

Whiskered Auklet ♦ *Aethia pygmaea* Probably 1500 of these superb little auklets around the Baby Is., Dutch Harbor.

Crested Auklet ♦ *Aethia cristatella* Around 200 at Dutch, and then 20 or so St. Paul, with one on a cliff already.

Rhinoceros Auklet ♦ *Cerorhinca monocerata* Just two in the Kenai Fjords, but seen well enough.

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

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

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

Black-throated Loon ♦ (Arctic L, B-t Diver) *Gavia arctica* One was scoped off Nome Harbour.

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

Common Loon (Great Northern Diver) *Gavia immer*

Laysan Albatross ♦ *Phoebastria immutabilis* Just one during our Dutch Harbor cruise.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Red-faced Cormorant ♦ *Phalacrocorax urile* Widespread sightings this year.

Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* One at Hidden Lake Campground.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* One on a nest near Nome.

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Red-tailed Hawk ♦ [Harlan's H] *Buteo [jamaicensis] harlani* One flew over en route from Kenai to Anchorage.

Rough-legged Buzzard ♦ (R-I Hawk) *Buteo lagopus* Two near Nome and one at Hatcher Pass.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* One was seen a couple of times on St. Paul.

Snowy Owl ◇ *Bubo scandiacus* A good year at Barrow with some great close views. 11+ seen.

Belted Kingfisher *Megasceryle alcyon*

American Three-toed Woodpecker ◇ *Picoides dorsalis* A very territorial male at Sockeye Burn.

Black-backed Woodpecker ◇ *Picoides arcticus* Ditto.

Downy Woodpecker *Dryobates pubescens*

Hairy Woodpecker [Eastern H W] *Leuconotopicus [villosus] villosus*

Merlin *Falco columbarius* One being mobbed along the Denali Highway.

Gyrfalcon ◇ *Falco rusticolus* Near Nome: one at a nest along the Kougarak Road, but distant.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* One at Barrow.

Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus cooperi* Heard-only. Sockeye Burn.

Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum* Several seen well.

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus* A flycatcher at Barrow was believed to best fit this species.

Canada Jay ◇ (Northern Grey J) *Perisoreus canadensis* Occasional in the boreal forests.

Steller's Jay ◇ [Coastal S J] *Cyanocitta [stelleri] stelleri* One seen very well near Seward, another in Anchorage.

Black-billed Magpie ◇ *Pica hudsonia*

American Crow ◇ [Northwestern C] *Corvus [brachyrhynchos] caurinus* Small numbers from Girdwood to Seward.

Northern Raven (Common R) *Corvus corax*

Chestnut-backed Chickadee ◇ *Poecile rufescens* A confiding bird near Seward.

Boreal Chickadee ◇ *Poecile hudsonicus* A pair seen well in Anchorage.

Black-capped Chickadee ◇ *Poecile atricapillus*

Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*

American Cliff Swallow (Cliff S) *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Corthylio calendula*

Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa* One seen and another heard at Hidden Lake Campground.

Pacific Wren ◇ *Troglodytes pacificus* Dutch Harbor (*petrophilus*), and St. Paul (*alascensis*).

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*

Common Starling (introduced) (European S) *Sturnus vulgaris*

Townsend's Solitaire ◇ *Myadestes townsendi* A surprise sighting at Barrow, as we checked-out from the hotel.

Varied Thrush ◇ *Ixoreus naevius* We enjoyed excellent views of this real stunner on several occasions.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

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.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* One seen quite well on St. Paul.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

Bluethroat [Red-spotted B] *Luscinia [svecica] svecica* Several singing males in the Nome area.

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* A rather flighty male on St. Paul.

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* A rather elusive male on St. Paul.

American Dipper *Cinclus mexicanus* Just one seen well near Nome.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail [Alaskan W] *Motacilla [tschutschensis] tschutschensis* Several around Nome.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* A vagrant male on St. Paul.

White Wagtail [East Siberian W] *Motacilla [alba] ocularis* At least three around Nome, where it breeds.

Buff-bellied Pipit (American P) *Anthus rubescens*

Brambling ◇ *Fringilla montifringilla* Good numbers on St. Paul this year, with 40-50 seen.

Hawfinch ◇ *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* Three or four seen well on St. Paul.

Pine Grosbeak ◇ [American P G] *Pinicola [enucleator] leucura* Three, including a smart adult male, in Kenai Pen.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* A female-plumaged bird on St. Paul.

Grey-crowned Rosy Finch ◇ [Grey-faced R F] *Leucosticte [t.] griseonucha* Unalaska (*griseonucha*), St. Paul (*umbrina*).

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Arctic Redpoll ◇ (Hoary R) *Carduelis hornemanni*

Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* A family of six near Seward.

Two-barred Crossbill [White-winged Crossbill] *Loxia [leucoptera] leucoptera* c.8 seen at Hillside Park

Pine Siskin *Spinus pinus*

Lapland Longspur (L Bunting) *Calcarius lapponicus*

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.

Rustic Bunting ◇ *Emberiza rustica* At least three seen on St. Paul.

Sooty Fox Sparrow ◇ *Plectrophenax unalaschensis* Many: *unalaschensis* Dutch; *sinuosa* Seward-Anchorage.

Red Fox Sparrow ◇ *Passerella iliaca* Common around Nome, and Denali-Paxson etc. (*zaboria*).

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

Dark-eyed Junco ◇ [Slate-coloured J] *Junco [hyemalis] hyemalis*

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* Widespread (*gambelii*).

Golden-crowned Sparrow ◇ *Zonotrichia atricapilla* Around Nome and higher levels of interior; also Dutch Harbor.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* Widespread *anthinus*.

Song Sparrow ◇ [Pacific S S] *Melospiza [melodia] rufina* Subspecies *sanaka* Unalaska; *kenaiensis* near Seward.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolni* One seen well in Anchorage.

Rusty Blackbird ◇ *Euphagus carolinus* Singles near Nome and at Tolsona Lake.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*

Orange-crowned Warbler *Leiothlypis celata*

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* A single stunner near Seward.

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

MAMMALS

Arctic Fox *Vulpes lagopus* Several seen on St. Paul. Also on Unalaska I, where it was recently accidentally introduced.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* One near Dutch Harbor, on Unalaska.

Polar Bear *Ursus maritimus* One was scoped on the sea-ice at Barrow.

Northern Fur Seal *Callorhinus ursinus* Many on St. Paul, where males were setting up territories.

Steller Sea Lion *Eumetopias jubatus*

Spotted Seal (Largha S) *Phoca largha* Quite a few resting on sea-ice at Nome.

Common (Harbour S) *Phoca vitulina*

Sea Otter *Enhydra lutris*

Elk (Moose) *Alces alces*

Mountain Goat *Oreamnos americanus* A mother and youngster during the Kenai Fjords cruise.

Musk Ox *Ovibos moschatus*

Thinhorn Sheep (Dall S) *Ovis dalli* 11 noted above Beluga point, with some good rams

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* Two during the Kenai Fjords cruise.

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

Beluga *Delphinapterus leucas* Two groups, totaling at least ten individuals, passing close inshore in Anchorage.

Dall's Porpoise *Phocoenoides dalli* At least three in a speedy group, during the Kenai Fjords cruise.

Snowshoe Hare *Lepus americanus* Numerous in the interior this year, especially along the Kougarak Road, Nome.

Collared Pika *Ochotona collaris* One at Hatcher Pass.

American Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*

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

American Beaver *Castor canadensis*

Brown Lemming *Lemmus trimucronatus* Several at Barrow.

Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus*

BUTTERFLIES

Canadian Tiger Swallowtail *Papilio canadensis* Hidden Lake Campground.

Milbert's Tortoiseshell *Aglais milberti* Ditto.

PLANTS

Wood Horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum*

Black Spruce *Picea mariana*

White Spruce *Picea glauca*

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

North Pacific Whitlow Grass *Draba grandis* St. Paul.

Greenland Cochlearia *Cochlearia groenlandica* St. Paul.

Cow Parsnip *Heracleum lanatum*

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

Dwarf Birch *Betula nana*

Quaking Aspen *Populus tremuloides*

Chickweed-Wintergreen *Lysimachia europaea*

Red Baneberry *Actaea rubra*

Salmonberry *Rubus spectabilis*

Bluebells *Mertensia paniculata*

Canadian Dwarf Cornel (C Dogwood, C Bunchberry) *Cornus canadensis*

Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* At the Smith's Longspur site.

Lapland Rhododendron (L Azalea) *Rhododendron lapponicum*

Marsh Labrador Tea *Rhododendron tomentosum* At the Smith's Longspur site.

Alpine Azalea (Trailing A) *Kalmia procumbens* At the Smith's Longspur site.

Bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*

Yellow Mountain-Heath *Phyllodoce glanduliflora* Unalaska Island.

Nootka Lupine *Lupinus nootkatensis*

Bogbean (Buckbean) *Menyanthes trifoliata*

Yellow Pond-lily *Nuphar polysepalum*

Snow Buttercup *Ranunculus nivalis* St. Paul.

Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala* At the Smith's Longspur site.

Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*

Woolly Lousewort *Pedicularis lanata* St. Paul.

Stiff-stem Saxifrage *Micranthes hieraciifolia* At the Smith's Longspur site.

Keyflower *Dactylorhiza aristata* The orchid seen on Unalaska Island.



Willow Ptarmigan (image by Craig Robson)



Whiskered Auklet (image by Craig Robson)



Tufted Puffin (image by Craig Robson)



Whiskered Auklet (image by Craig Robson)



Tufted Puffin (image by Craig Robson)



The coastline of St. Paul (image by Craig Robson)



Snowy Owl (image by Craig Robson)



Snowshoe Hare (image by Craig Robson)



Rock Sandpiper (image by Craig Robson)



Parakeet Auklet (image by Craig Robson)



Snowy Owl (image by Craig Robson)



Pomarine Jaeger (image by Craig Robson)



Red-legged Kittiwake (image by Craig Robson)



Red-necked Stint (image by Craig Robson)



Parakeet Auklet (image by Craig Robson)



Pacific Wren on St. Paul (image by Craig Robson)



Northern Fur Seal (image by Craig Robson)



Northwestern Glacier (image by Craig Robson)



Nome (image by Craig Robson)



Musk Ox (image by Craig Robson)



Grey-crowned Rosy Finches and Brambling (image by Craig Robson)



Crested Auklet (image by Craig Robson)



Harbour Seal (image by Craig Robson)



Red-necked Stint (image by Craig Robson)



Birding on St. Paul (image by Craig Robson)



Ancient Murrelet (image by Craig Robson)



Arctic Tern (image by Craig Robson)



Dutch Harbor (image by Craig Robson)



Whiskered Auklet (image by Craig Robson)



Hawfinch (image by Craig Robson)



Horned Puffin (image by Craig Robson)



Tufted Puffin (image by Craig Robson)



Dutch Harbor (image by Craig Robson)



Black-backed Woodpecker (image by Craig Robson)



Breeding habitat of Bristle-thighed Curlew (image by Craig Robson)



The Birdquest group at St. Paul (image by Craig Robson)



Kougarak Road (image by Craig Robson)



Least Sandpiper (image by Craig Robson)



The Birdquest group at St. Paul (image by Craig Robson)



Breeding habitat of Smith's Longspur (image by Craig Robson)