



## ALASKA TOUR REPORT

2nd – 16th JUNE 2018

### TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

- White-billed Diver
- Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel
- Tundra Bean Goose
- King Eider
- Spectacled Eider
- Steller's Eider
- Harlequin Duck
- Black Scoter
- White-winged Scoter
- Barrow's Goldeneye
- Red-faced Cormorant
- Willow Ptarmigan
- Rock Ptarmigan
- Rough-legged Buzzard
- Black Oystercatcher
- Upland Sandpiper
- Bristle-thighed Curlew
- Common Sandpiper!
- Rock Sandpiper
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper
- Red Phalarope
- Long-tailed Skua
- Brunnich's Guillemot
- Pigeon Guillemot
- Marbled Murrelet
- Kittlitz's Murrelet
- Rhinoceros Auklet
- Tufted Puffin
- Horned Puffin
- Vega Gull
- Slaty-backed Gull
- Sabine's Gull
- Aleutian Tern
- Rufous Hummingbird
- Snowy Owl
- Northern Hawk Owl
- Gyrfalcon
- Grey Jay
- Northwestern Crow
- Boreal Chickadee
- Northern Wheatear!
- Bluethroat
- Varied Thrush
- Eastern Yellow Wagtail
- Bohemian Waxwing
- Pine Grosbeak
- Two-barred Crossbill
- Arctic Redpoll
- Red Fox Sparrow
- Sooty Fox Sparrow
- Rusty Blackbird
- Arctic Warbler
- Blackpoll Warbler
- Townsend's Warbler
- Walrus
- Grizzly Bear
- Black Bear
- Sea Otter
- Killer Whale
- Dall's Porpoise

### SUMMARY:

What an amazing adventure Alaska provides the visiting birder. The heady mix of some of the most iconic birds in North America, some extraordinary mammals, and *THE* most amazing scenery imaginable makes this a truly fantastic tour. Beginning in Anchorage, the hub for any Alaskan tour we immediately took a flight to the rarity capital of Nome, situated literally in the middle of nowhere. Here we spent several days enjoying what was probably the best birding of the entire tour with Harlequin Duck, Spectacled Eider, Rock Sandpiper, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Brunnich's Guillemot, Gyrfalcon, Aleutian Tern and more. Rarities for our North

American lists aren't that exciting to visiting European birders but in context its always exciting to see these out-of-range species such as Eurasian Wigeon, Pacific Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Sandpiper, Northern Wheatear and Eastern Yellow Wagtail. We even had the added bonus of a huge Walrus loafing on a beach and a Grey Whale, as well as the expected Musk Ox. Moving on to the even more remote and desolate location of Barrow we found the Arctic Ocean frozen solid, and every road covered in ice and snow making our views of Snowy Owl a very atmospheric occasion! We found a rare Tundra Bean Goose on our first afternoon, whilst breeding-plumaged Red Phalaropes stole our hearts and we spent quite some time each day admiring these beauties. Seeing Spectacled, King and Steller's Eiders in such a setting was one of the most unforgettable sightings one can experience on any birding tour and we enjoyed fine looks at all three species. Returning to Anchorage we then drove to Seward where our exploration of Resurrection Bay was successful with Marbled Murrelets and Pigeon Guillemots seen well from the shore, flocks of Barrow's Goldeneyes being joined by Harlequin Ducks, Rufous Hummingbird, Northwestern Crow and Pine Grosbeak being the pick of a good bunch. However, our day spent cruising the Kenai fjords eclipsed that with spectacular sightings of Killer Whale, Humpback Whale, Dall's Porpoise, Sea Otter and even a Black Bear. We did eventually spot Kittlitz's Murrelet, enjoyed the added bonus of a Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, sailed up close to a Black-legged Kittiwake colony that was absolutely deafening, sailed alongside breeding colonies of seabirds where Rhinoceros Auklet, Horned and Tufted Puffins and even a couple of Red-faced Cormorants provided many more unforgettable moments captured in the minds-eye and by our cameras. We ended the tour amidst yet even more spectacular scenery, including crystal clear views of Mount McKinley, at Denali where we saw Surf and White-winged Scoters on the lakes, Northern Hawk Owl perched atop a conifer with snow-clad mountains behind, Bohemian Waxwings and singing Arctic Warbler, as well as Caribou, Beaver, North American Porcupine and even a family of Grizzly Bears. Our Alaska tour certainly lived up to expectations and more!

## Days 1 - 2 ARRIVAL IN ANCHORAGE - NOME

Our first day was purely an arrival day into Anchorage, where the members of our group met up for dinner on our first evening. The following morning we flew on the 10am flight to Nome, one of the top birding sites in North America. Needless to say everyone was really excited to be here, and it was such a spectacular flight with snow-covered hills and mountains visible from the plane as we approached this remote outpost in the Alaskan wilderness, and we were certainly ready to begin our exploration. Rental cars were obtained, room keys at our motel were available and lunch at Subway was almost an inconvenience before we could set off on the Council Road that follows the coast south, bordered on one side by tundra and on the other by the Bering Sea. First up



Typical Nome Scenery

were the exceedingly common **Glaucous Gulls**, with **Wilson's Snipe**, **Lapland Longspur** and a **Red-throated Diver** sitting on its nest close by.

The pattern for the rest of the day from 2pm – 8.15pm was just to stop along the road whenever we saw something of interest. It's really difficult to give an accurate chronological order of events, but the next 'biggie' was a **Slaty-backed Gull**, which showed a few times before flying away, and a **Vega Gull**. The nearby willows held **Golden-crowned**, **American Tree**, **Red Fox** and **White-crowned Sparrows**, plus our first **Grey-cheeked Thrush** and **Arctic (Hoary) Redpoll**. Numerous small lagoons and lakes held a

variety of waterfowl including **Greater Scaup**, **Northern Pintail**, **Black Brant**, a single **Northern Shoveler**, **American Wigeon**, and **Green-winged Teal**. Out to see we encountered flocks of **Black Scoter**, with numerous **White-winged Scoter** and a single drake **Surf Scoter**. But I think the group of 8 **Harlequin Ducks** just offshore really stole the show. And talking of stealing the show, you just couldn't beat the stunning and totally amazing sighting of a male **Walrus** hauling itself onto a beach and frolicking in the surf right below us. It was a mesmerizing and totally gobsmacking experience and was totally out of the blue. And we even saw a **Gray Whale** close inshore and not too far away from the **Walrus**. Unbelievable!



Walrus

The tundra was home to quite a few sexy **Long-tailed Skuas** (Jaegers), whilst a group of **Pomarine Skuas** and a couple of **Arctic Skuas** also flew over at various stages during the afternoon. Breeding shorebirds mainly comprised of **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, with smaller number of **Western Sandpipers**, plus **Least Sandpiper** on a sandbank, a few **Semipalmated Plovers**, and a single **Pacific Golden Plover**. A pair of **Bar-tailed Godwits** was nice, as were small groups of shorebirds on the beaches that included both **Ruddy** and **Black Turnstones**, and a few immaculate-looking **Surfbirds**. Numerous **Red-necked Phalaropes** adorned the small pools, with a few flocks out on the open ocean, and at one stage late in the day a pair of awesome **Red Phalaropes**

appeared. One of my personal favourites was the summer-plumaged **Sabine's Gulls**, a few of which were loafing in the coastal lagoons. But it wasn't until the final hour of the day did the two best avian highlights of the day occur. First of all, a random roadside stop to scan some waders on the beach produce the unexpected sighting of a pair of **Rock Sandpipers**. What odd birds these were and how obliging they were to the camera toting birders amongst us! And, thanks to some diligent observational skills by Andy, we eventually nailed the much-wanted **Aleutian Tern**. It wasn't close but that's why we carry scopes with us right?

Other good sighting today certainly include the numerous **Red-throated Divers** we saw, a single breeding-plumaged **Great Northern Diver (Common Loon)**, some displaying **Willow Ptarmigans**, **Pelagic Cormorants**, loads of **Mew Gulls**, **Yellow Warbler** etc. All of this surrounded by the awe-inspiring landscape certainly made this a great day and one we would never forget.

### Day 3 NOME

We returned to Council Road this morning and headed some 45 miles out into the wilderness. Things were much quieter this time and the first couple of hours were spent driving, scanning and driving. We made frequent stops to peruse good areas without turning up anything new, except a distant **White-billed Diver (Yellow-billed Loon)**. There were lots of **Red-throated Divers**, **Black Scoters**, **Glaucous Gulls**, a few **Sabine's Gulls**, a close **Arctic Redpoll**, **Lapland Longspurs** and more of the same



Rock Sandpiper



species we saw yesterday. The scenery was stunning with the open tundra dotted with small lakes and snow-capped hills dominating the horizon, and the sound of waves crashing onto the shore from the Bering Sea. We were hoping for **Emperor Goose** along here, but alas we had no such luck, and had to content ourselves with quite a few **Aleutian Terns** flying around and over the road. We came across a few **Cackling Geese**, some **Snow**



**Nome Scenery**

**Geese**, many **Tundra Swans**, **Sandhill Cranes** and a most unexpected drake **Spectacled Eider**. Holy cow! What an adrenaline rush that one gave everybody! It's a rare bird here at Nome and not something I've seen reported in other trip reports. You expect it at Barrow but not here. This sighting even eclipsed the stunning grey-morph **Gyr Falcon** perched on a rocky crag high above the road. So by now it was well past 1pm and we had to return to Nome for lunch, so off we drove passing a distant herd of **Musk Ox** along the way. Teller Road was our destination this afternoon. We checked a few migrant spots around town before heading out into the bleak landscape, where we enjoyed amazing close views of a singing

**Blackpoll Warbler**, as well as **Grey-cheeked Thrush**, **Northern Shrike**, **Common Redpolls** and some closer **Harlequin Ducks** along a fast-flowing river. Moving on we saw **Yellow**, **Orange-crowned** and **Wilson's Warblers**, **Golden-crowned** and **Red Fox Sparrows**, and a perched **Rough-legged Hawk**. We ended the day at Nome rivermouth where we were treated to our best views of **Aleutian Terns** perched on a sandbank before flying overhead after being disturbed by an **Arctic Skua (Parasitic Jaeger)**.



**Bristle-thighed Curlew**



**Aleutian Tern**

#### Day 4 NOME

An early start saw us driving 72 miles along the Kougarak Road towards Coffee Dome and the displaying grounds of **Bristle-thighed Curlew**. Along the way we stopped to watch a couple displaying **Bluethroats**, and watched them song-fighting high into the air before parachuting down to land in the dwarf willow scrub. We were also able to watch some close **Willow Grouse** beside the road, followed by **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **Tundra Swans**, and a pair of **Pacific Divers** on a picturesque lake. The scenery was again outstanding, with snow-capped mountains, tundra, rivers, lakes – all bathed in sunshine. Oh and a **Moose** was pretty cool too! We'd almost arrived at Coffee Dome when a **Long-tailed Skua** was spotted close to the road, so we jumped out and soaked up yet more awesome views of this wonderful bird. On arrival at the required spot we donned wellington boots and walked up the hill in bright sunshine, getting detained by a calling **American Golden Plover** doing its distraction display. Once near the top we were lucky to firstly hear and then see a displaying **Bristle-thighed Curlew**. It took another hour but we eventually tracked one down feeding on the moorland and then watched it for a good 45 minutes. Just as we were about to leave another bird began displaying, which prompted the bird we were watching to soar into the sky, calling and circled a few times high above us before dropping down just over the brow of the hill. Wow!

Leaving here we drove back along the road, this time seeing **Snowshoe Hare**, **Alaskan Hare** and **Arctic Ground Squirrel**. More **Bluethroats** were seen, a **Rough-legged Hawk** was sat on a nest, **Cliff Swallows** were nesting under a bridge, and there was also **Northern Harrier**, **American Tree Sparrow**, **Grey-cheeked Thrush**, and a few **Wilson's Warblers**. At a river bridge a flock of **Red-necked Phalaropes** were feeding below us, and we watched



Photos clockwise: Willow Ptarmigan, Wandering Tattler, Long-tailed Skua & Rock Ptarmigan



them sail along with the tide under the bridge before flying back under us and upstream a ways before sailing back under the bridge again – just like avian Pooh Sticks! A cracking pair of **Wandering Tattlers** was also present here and we watched them for ages, before one began feeding on a snow bank directly below us giving the best views imaginable.

### Day 5 NOME

Headed along Teller Road this morning and into yet more wilderness areas with fantastic vistas. The highlight was a close male **Rock Ptarmigan** that was sat close beside the road and totally ignored us, along with all the usual suspects such as **Wilson's Warblers**, **Golden-crowned Sparrows** etc..... We turned off to Woolley Lagoon and found a male **Northern Wheatear** perched on one of the boulders, and there was also a pair of **Wandering Tattlers**, **Ruddy Turnstone** and **Black-bellied Plovers** here as well. Then we hotfooted it back to town for a Subway lunch before setting off along the Council Road and our goose quest... We birded our way along Safety Lagoon, finding a pair of **Eurasian Wigeon**, a close **Brunnich's Guillemot**, and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** until the end and then headed inland, where in the first drizzle of the trip we found a **Golden Eagle** sitting on a nest just 10 feet up from the road on a small cliff! Wow! We followed that with a perched **Gyr Falcon** before heading back up to Safety Lagoon. Our first **Snow Bunting** was nice, and we sifted through flocks of shorebirds seeing lots of **Western Sandpipers**, as well as the very common



Brunnich's Guillemot

**Semipalmated Sandpipers**. A couple of **Red Knots** were spotted on the beach behind us, with a loafing drake **Common Merganser (Goosander)**, and lots of commoner species. We eventually reached the hotel at 9.30pm for dinner... We just didn't want the day to end!

### Day 5 NOME - BARROW

With just a couple of hours spare before we had to drive to the small airport for our flight to Barrow via Anchorage, we headed off along the coast road back to Safety Lagoon. A stop at Nome Point to do a short sea-watch resulted in 5 **King Eiders**, including a superb full adult male, 8 **Horned Puffins**, **Pelagic Cormorants**, **Arctic Skua** and a number of **Brunnich's Guillemots**. At Safety Bridge we picked up the reported **Common Sandpiper**, as well as a pair of really close **Harlequin Ducks** that Chris initially spotted perched on the rocks right below the road. Soaking up the views as they slowly drifted away and with camera shutters clicking away, it's hard to think of a better duck than this. Yet we might well have done, with the reappearance of the rare (in this area)



Harlequin Ducks

**Spectacled Eider**, albeit this time two drakes are sleeping on one of the islands in the lagoon. But the early morning light makes viewing them through the scope a supreme experience and we soak up every aspect of their immaculate and rather sexy plumage. There are plenty of other birds to see that help while away our time such as **Sandhill Cranes**, **Tundra Swans**, **Red-throated Divers**, **Cackling Goose**, a flyover **Aleutian Tern**, close singing **Lapland Longspurs** and more.

Our flight to Barrow via Anchorage was painless and at 6pm we had arrived. After checking into our rooms we headed out into the snowy wilderness that is Barrow at this time of year, and it was totally amazing to see the Arctic Ocean under several metres of ice and snow. In fact the whole area was under a blanket of thick snow with some roads closed and I was a tad afraid we had arrived a few days too early as the thaw had yet to begin. However, there were a few open areas of marsh and water, and the ones we did find were full of **Greater White-fronted Geese**, as well as loads of shorebirds such as **Pectoral Sandpipers**, **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, **Dunlins** in fine breeding plumage, **American Golden Plovers** etc. But the **Red Phalaropes**



**Tundra Bean Goose**

completely stole the show and seeing them for the first time resplendent in breeding finery was like ticking a new bird. We saw many of them and had our first stab at getting some photos. We also found a **Tundra Bean Goose** – a very rare bird in Alaska. Oh and a male **Snowy Owl** flew by, briefly joining a high flying **Short-eared Owl** before alighting on a wall of ice making any attempt at getting a photo really tricky. It was 11pm by the time we returned to the hotel in broad daylight....

## **Day 6 BARROW**

We were out at 7am, travelling the short network of roads that are open due to the snow and ice covering most of the surrounding tundra. As yesterday **Red Phalaropes** were amazing and everywhere, often beside the road and gave excellent photographic opportunities. However, the standout sighting of the morning was the 3 pairs of **Steller's Eiders** loafing around one of the few roadside pools and we watched the males giving a short display, bobbing their heads and swimming around the females. The views in the scope were awesome! Later in the day we saw a group of 10 on a distant lake... Wow!

The rest of our morning comprised of checking all the open roads where the tundra or pools were visible and we enjoyed fine looks at **Snow Buntings**, numerous **Semipalmated** and **Pectoral Sandpipers**, **Sanderlings** in breeding finery etc. A walk across the tundra produced a single superb **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** that fed totally oblivious to our presence some 20 metres away. After lunch we had a siesta before venturing out both sides of dinner and returned to the hotel again at 11pm. There was another flight view of **Snowy Owl**, some



**Red Phalarope**



showy **Short-eared Owls** (at least 9 sightings), a distant **Bearded Seal**, **Long-billed Dowitcher**, a fine **White-rumped Sandpiper**, some **Red-necked Phalaropes**, and several **Pomarine** and **Arctic Skuas** amongst others.

## Day 7 BARROW

Woke up to strong winds, light snow and some rain. It was much colder than yesterday but this inclement weather didn't seem to deter the birds. There was much more movement today and everything felt different. We picked up a group of 16 **Steller's Eiders** at one wetland, and we had a flock of what was probably 40 **Spectacled Eiders** flying over, plus a female **Spectacled** at another wetland. All the usual shorebirds were seen, including the same **White-rumped Sandpiper** as yesterday. After lunch, we paid a short visit to the Information Centre/Museum, followed by a siesta before venturing out once more into the cold weather and checking all of the same sites again. There was generally less birds present at the start, but then we found 10 **Steller's Eiders** in one of the wetlands, followed by a pair of spectacular **Spectacled Eiders** roosting about 150m away further along the same wetland area. In the strong winds we scoped the birds and enjoyed really great views once they woke up and began swimming around. Awesome!



Spectacled Eider - Bird of the trip!

## Day 8 BARROW - ANCHORAGE

With just 2 hours available to us for birding before our flight to Anchorage we checked all the usual areas and came up trumps with a group of 16 **Steller's Eiders** in a roadside wetland. We watched them displaying, surrounded by snow and lapped up the views. The next pool held 3 pairs of **King Eiders** and a sleeping pair of **Spectacled Eiders** and both these species looked absolutely fantastic in the scope. And that was our lot. As we headed back to the hotel I must admit I had a tinge of sadness at leaving the **Red Phalaropes**!

Our flight left on time and we were soon back in Anchorage at the same hotel as before, enjoying an hour 'off' before visiting the nearby lake, followed by Earthquake Park and a nearby wetland. The first bird we had was a summer-plumaged **Bonaparte's Gull** near the lakeshore. A **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Short-billed Dowitcher** and a fantastic count of 34 **Red-necked Grebes** on the lake here were the best finds, along with an 'Aleutian' **Cackling Goose** before returning to the hotel and a really nice evening meal.



## Day 9 ANCHORAGE - SEWARD

Checked out Hillside Park on the outskirts of Anchorage first thing this morning and walked around the trails finding **Myrtle Warblers**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, nice views of a singing **Varied Thrush**, **Swainson's Thrush**, and **Boreal Chickadee**. We followed this with a visit to the Campbell Airstrip Trailhead where we enjoyed fine views of an **American Dipper** on a nest before heading back to the hotel to finish packing and head out on the drive south to Seward. It wasn't a long drive south, but once again the scenery was stunning. A stop at Potter Marsh produced a pair of **Trumpeter Swans** attending a nest, lots of **Arctic Terns** and **Mew Gulls** were also nesting here, whilst **American Wigeon**, **Sandhill Crane**, a single **Red-necked Phalarope** and a flyover **Bald Eagle** all added to the scene. Moving on, we hadn't driven far when we stopped to view a **Moose** with antlers beside the road. Continuing on, the road passed through a spectacular valley with snow-capped peaks and roadside lakes and a short stop for refreshments at a roadside café was much appreciated.

At Seward we checked the shoreline of Resurrection Bay and found several **Marbled Murrelets**, several **Pigeon Guillemots**, a group of **Barrow's Goldeneyes**, **Harlequin Ducks**, **Glaucous-winged Gull**, **American Black Oystercatcher**, and around the corner **Northwestern Crow**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, **Steller's Jay**, **Alder Flycatcher**, **Sooty Fox Sparrow** and also enjoyed watching a group of 3 **Steller's Sealions** swimming just offshore.

## Day 10 KENAI FJORDS BOAT TRIP

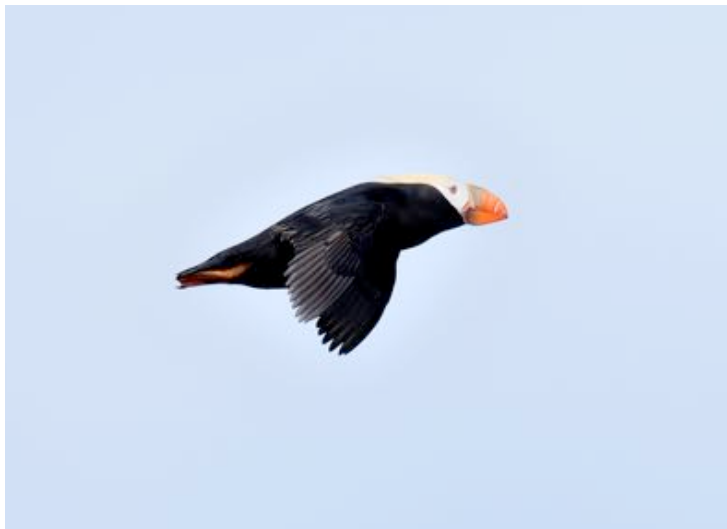
Headed out on the 8.30am boat trip to the NW glacier. A feeding **Sea Otter** in the harbour was a nice way to start and we would see plenty more throughout the 9-hour excursion. What a day this was with a pod of **Killer Whales** showing superbly in Resurrection Bay, including a huge bull and a mother with small calf. A few **Marbled Murrelets** were seen by most of the group, along with the first **Horned Puffin** of the day. Then the call went up of a whale and we honed in on a couple **Humpback Whales** feeding and showing their tale flukes. More Humpbacks followed, as well as distant



Horned Puffin

**Dall's Porpoise**. The boat then guided us through some islands where **Horned** and

**Tufted Puffins** were breeding and we saw both really well including some perched birds on the grassy slopes



Tufted Puffin

and ledges, along with a couple of **Red-faced Cormorants** that were a bonus. In fact we had numerous opportunities to get really nice looks at the puffins as well as some great photo opportunities. Moving on we also nailed several **Rhinoceros Auklets** swimming on the water amongst the puffins.

We eventually headed into another bay and to the hugely impressive NW glacier where large boulders of ice crashed into the sea not too far away from us, and our first decent sighting was of a **Black Bear** clambering on a steep snow-covered slope. A few murrelets swimming in front of the ship defied positive i.d although we definitely nailed at least one of the rare **Kittlitz's**

**Murrelet** and many **Harbour Seals** loafed on the icebergs broken off from the glacier. At the far end of the bay we spent some time admiring the scenery before heading back, seeing more **Marbled Murrelets** and a pod of transient **Killer Whales**, these ones were just visitors being of a smaller in size, with a much reduced dorsal fin and were hunting seals, as opposed to the resident **Orcas** who hunt fish. Crossing the bay, we had a surprising **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** and a **Northern Fulmar** before coming to more islands where thousands of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were breeding, and our ship pulled in pretty close so we could get the full effect of a seabird breeding colony – including the aroma! Some **Steller's Sea Lions** loafed and sunned themselves hauled out onto rocks, and shortly after we had two brief encounters with **Dall's Porpoises** and more **Humpback Whales** showed really well.

Arriving back in port at 5.30pm we drove out to check the humming feeder and promptly watched a female **Pine Grosbeak** fly into a nearby apple tree and begin to destroy the new blossom! What great views we had and she fed totally oblivious to our presence. This was quickly followed by a couple of male **Rufous Hummingbirds** that also proved quite obliging, and we almost ignored a few **Steller's Jays** in the neighbourhood. Driving back to the motel, some **Harlequin Ducks** were in the bay below the road, as well as a nice drake **Barrow's Goldeneye** that was sitting on the rocky shore. What a day. Wow!



Photos clockwise: Humpback Whale, Pine Grosbeak, Barrow's Goldeneye & Harlequin Duck and Killer whales.



## Day 11 SEWARD - DENALI

We checked out some areas around Seward after breakfast this morning, including a house with some feeders that attracted a pair of **Pine Grosbeaks** and we were really pleased to see the bright red male. There were also 2 female and a male **Red Crossbills** nearby, with both **Song** and **Sooty Fox Sparrows** and **Pine Siskin**. Then we drove around some tracks in the forest where a few **Varied Thrushes** were watched feeding in front of us – no good for photos but the views were great. In Resurrection Bay we saw 3 **Humpback Whales** quite close to town, a **Sea Otter** and 2 **Marbled Murrelets**.

Then we set out on the 6 hour drive to Cantwell near Denali, passing through an immense landscape of snow-capped peaks, topped off by sterling views in clear blue skies of Mount McKinley. The mixed forest eventually gave way to a sparse pine forest and tundra as we neared our destination reminiscent of parts of Scotland or Arctic Norway and Lapland. After checking in to our cabins we had dinner at a great little restaurant with some of the best food of the tour.

## DAY 12 DENALI HIGHWAY

A long day began with a 6am departure for the Denali Highway and ended at 10:45pm.... What a day this was and with some of the best scenery of the entire tour complimenting a select bunch of bird and mammal sightings, culminating in our first **Grizzly Bear**, a sow with two year old juveniles. We made lots of stops along the drive to view the numerous lakes and scenic overlooks and the first lake held a drake **Surf Scoter** and our first **Lesser Yellowlegs**, as well as a pair of **Spotted Sandpipers**. We followed this with a flock of 5 **Bohemian**



Denali Highway Scenery

**Waxwings**, a very confiding singing **Arctic Warbler**, there were close **Wilson's Warblers**, **Red Fox Sparrow**, a flyover flock of **White-winged Crossbills**, **Grey-cheeked Thrush**, **Swainson's** and **Varied Thrushes**, a family of **Grey Jays**, **Northern shrike**, **Alder Flycatcher**, more **Bohemian Waxwings**, **Rough-legged Hawk**, **Common** and **Red-throated Loons**, **Wilson's Snipe**, **Barrow's Goldeneyes**, **Caribou**, and a **Porcupine**.



Our return journey proved to be a long drive of over two hours seeing a pair of distant **Beavers**, and on a crystal clear lake a drake **Surf Scoter**, several **Red-necked Grebes** and a flock of **White-winged Scoters** were present. But nearing the end of the drive we were rewarded with a pair of **Upland Sandpipers**, with one of them stood on the road in front of us, and finally a **Northern Hawk Owl** perched majestically on top of a Black Spruce with snow-covered mountains forming the perfect backdrop behind it. A return to our favourite restaurant and some of the local 'Panty Peeler' ale caused some amusement before finally retiring to our cabins for the night at 10;45pm.

### **DAY 13 DENALI NATIONAL PARK**

Headed into the National Park on one of the park buses to the Visitor Centre seeing a huge **Grizzly Bear** quite close to the road along the way. We also scoped **Dall's Sheep** and saw plenty of **Caribou** etc. We were surrounded by stunning scenery all day, although being cooped up in the park's bus wasn't my cup of tea and I couldn't wait to get back to the van. In hindsight, I wouldn't do this day trip again and instead, have another crack along yesterday's road.

### **DAY 14 DENALI - ANCHORAGE**

Mainly a travelling day, as rain and poor weather meant birding stops were difficult and we didn't see much at all. So we headed back to the usual motel for our last dinner together before departures back home tomorrow.

Nick Bray.



Grizzly Bear

## SYSTEMATIC LIST – ALASKA JUNE 2018

### ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Black Brant	<u><i>Branta bernicla nigricans</i></u>
Lesser Canada Goose	<u><i>Branta canadensis parvipes</i></u>
Aleutian Cackling Goose	<u><i>Branta hutchinsii leucopareia</i></u>
Taverner's Cackling Goose	<i>Branta hutchinsii taverneri</i>
Snow Goose	<u><i>Anser caerulescens</i></u>
Greater White-fronted Goose	<u><i>Anser albifrons</i></u>
Tundra Bean Goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>
Trumpeter Swan	<u><i>Cygnus buccinator</i></u>
Tundra (Whistling) Swan	<u><i>Cygnus c. columbianus</i></u>
Northern Shoveler	<u><i>Spatula clypeata</i></u>
Gadwall	<u><i>Mareca strepera</i></u>
Eurasian Wigeon	<u><i>Mareca penelope</i></u>
American Wigeon	<u><i>Mareca americana</i></u>
Mallard	<u><i>Anas platyrhynchos</i></u>
Northern Pintail	<u><i>Anas acuta</i></u>
Green-winged Teal	<u><i>Anas carolinensis</i></u>
Ring-necked Duck	<u><i>Aythya collaris</i></u>
Greater Scaup	<u><i>Aythya marila</i></u>
Steller's Eider	<u><i>Polysticta stelleri</i></u>
Spectacled Eider	<u><i>Somateria fischeri</i></u>
King Eider	<u><i>Somateria spectabilis</i></u>
Common Eider	<u><i>Somateria mollissima</i></u>
Harlequin Duck	<u><i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i></u>
Surf Scoter	<u><i>Melanitta perspicillata</i></u>
White-winged Scoter	<u><i>Melanitta deglandi</i></u>
Black Scoter	<u><i>Melanitta americana</i></u>
Long-tailed Duck	<u><i>Clangula hyemalis</i></u>
Common Goldeneye	<u><i>Bucephala clangula</i></u>
Barrow's Goldeneye	<u><i>Bucephala islandica</i></u>
Common Merganser	<u><i>Mergus merganser</i></u>
Red-breasted Merganser	<u><i>Mergus serrator</i></u>

### GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

Rock Ptarmigan	<u><i>Lagopus muta</i></u>
Willow Ptarmigan	<u><i>Lagopus lagopus</i></u>

### GAVIIFORMES: Gaviidae

Red-throated Loon	<u><i>Gavia stellata</i></u>
Pacific Loon	<u><i>Gavia pacifica</i></u>
Common Loon	<u><i>Gavia immer</i></u>

Yellow-billed Loon *Gavia adamsii*

**PROCELLARIIFORMES: Hydrobatidae**

Fork-tailed Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma furcata*

**PROCELLARIIFORMES: Procellariidae**

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

**PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae**

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

**SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae**

Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

Red-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax urile*

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

**ACCIPITRIFORMES: Pandionidae**

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

**ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae**

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

**GRUIFORMES: Gruidae**

Sandhill Crane *Antigone canadensis*

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Haematopodidae**

Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani*

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae**

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae**

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*

Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis*

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*



Black Turnstone	<u><i>Arenaria melanocephala</i></u>
Red Knot	<u><i>Calidris canutus</i></u>
Surfbird	<u><i>Calidris virgata</i></u>
Sanderling	<u><i>Calidris alba</i></u>
Dunlin	<u><i>Calidris alpina</i></u>
Rock Sandpiper	<u><i>Calidris ptilocnemis</i></u>
Least Sandpiper	<u><i>Calidris minutilla</i></u>
White-rumped Sandpiper	<u><i>Calidris fuscicollis</i></u>
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<u><i>Calidris subruficollis</i></u>
Pectoral Sandpiper	<u><i>Calidris melanotos</i></u>
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<u><i>Calidris pusilla</i></u>
Western Sandpiper	<u><i>Calidris mauri</i></u>
Long-billed Dowitcher	<u><i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i></u>
Short-billed Dowitcher	<u><i>Limnodromus griseus</i></u>
Wilson's Snipe	<u><i>Gallinago delicata</i></u>
Red-necked Phalarope	<u><i>Phalaropus lobatus</i></u>
Red Phalarope	<u><i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i></u>
Spotted Sandpiper	<u><i>Actitis macularius</i></u>
Common Sandpiper	<u><i>Actitis hypoleucos</i></u>
Wandering Tattler	<u><i>Tringa incana</i></u>
Lesser Yellowlegs	<u><i>Tringa flavipes</i></u>
Greater Yellowlegs	<u><i>Tringa melanoleuca</i></u>

#### **CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae**

Black-legged Kittiwake	<u><i>Rissa tridactyla pollicaris</i></u>
Sabine's Gull	<u><i>Xema sabini</i></u>
Bonaparte's Gull	<u><i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i></u>
Mew Gull	<u><i>Larus canus</i></u>
Glaucous-winged Gull	<u><i>Larus glaucescens</i></u>
Glaucous Gull	<u><i>Larus hyperboreus</i></u>
American Herring Gull	<u><i>Larus smithsonianus</i></u>
Vega Gull	<u><i>Larus vegae</i></u>
Slaty-backed Gull	<u><i>Larus schistisagus</i></u>
Aleutian Tern	<u><i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i></u>
Arctic Tern	<u><i>Sterna paradisaea</i></u>

#### **CHARADRIIFORMES: Stercorariidae**

Pomarine Jaeger	<u><i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i></u>
Parasitic Jaeger	<u><i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i></u>
Long-tailed Jaeger	<u><i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i></u>

#### **CHARADRIIFORMES: Alcidae**

Brunnich's Guillemot	<u><i>Uria lomvia</i></u>
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Common Guillemot	<u><i>Uria aalge</i></u>
Pigeon Guillemot	<u><i>Cepphus columba</i></u>
Marbled Murrelet	<u><i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i></u>
Kittlitz's Murrelet	<u><i>Brachyramphus brevirostris</i></u>
Rhinoceros Auklet	<u><i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i></u>
Horned Puffin	<u><i>Fratercula corniculata</i></u>
Tufted Puffin	<u><i>Fratercula cirrhata</i></u>

**COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae**

Rock Dove	<u><i>Columba livia</i></u>
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**STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae**

Snowy Owl	<u><i>Bubo scandiacus</i></u>
Northern Hawk-Owl	<u><i>Surnia ulula</i></u>
Short-eared Owl	<u><i>Asio flammeus</i></u>

**APODIFORMES: Trochilidae**

Rufous Hummingbird	<u><i>Selasphorus rufus</i></u>
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**FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae**

Gyr Falcon	<u><i>Falco rusticolus</i></u>
Peregrine Falcon	<u><i>Falco peregrinus</i></u>

**PASSERIFORMES: Tyrannidae**

Alder Flycatcher	<u><i>Empidonax alnorum</i></u>
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**PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae**

Northern Shrike	<u><i>Lanius borealis</i></u>
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**PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae**

Grey Jay	<u><i>Perisoreus canadensis</i></u>
Steller's Jay	<u><i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i></u>
Black-billed Magpie	<u><i>Pica hudsonia</i></u>
Northwestern Crow	<u><i>Corvus caurinus</i></u>
Northern Raven	<u><i>Corvus corax</i></u>

**PASSERIFORMES: Bombycillidae**

Bohemian Waxwing	<u><i>Bombycilla garrulus</i></u>
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**PASSERIFORMES: Paridae**

Black-capped Chickadee	<u><i>Poecile atricapillus</i></u>
Boreal Chickadee	<u><i>Poecile hudsonicus</i></u>
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	<u><i>Poecile rufescens</i></u>

**PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae**

Sand Martin	<u><i>Riparia riparia</i></u>
Tree Swallow	<u><i>Tachycineta bicolor</i></u>
Violet-green Swallow	<u><i>Tachycineta thalassina</i></u>
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<u><i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i></u>
Barn Swallow	<u><i>Hirundo rustica</i></u>
American Cliff Swallow	<u><i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i></u>

**PASSERIFORMES: Phylloscopidae**

Arctic Warbler	<u><i>Phylloscopus borealis kennicotti</i></u>
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**PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae**

Golden-crowned Kinglet	<u><i>Regulus satrapa</i></u>
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<u><i>Regulus calendula</i></u>

**PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae**

Red-breasted Nuthatch	<u><i>Sitta canadensis</i></u>
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**PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae**

Common Starling	<u><i>Sturnus vulgaris</i></u>
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**PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae**

Varied Thrush	<u><i>Ixoreus naevius</i></u>
Grey-cheeked Thrush	<u><i>Catharus minimus</i></u>
Swainson's Thrush	<u><i>Catharus ustulatus</i></u>
Hermit Thrush	<u><i>Catharus guttatus nanus</i></u>
American Robin	<u><i>Turdus migratorius</i></u>

**PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae**

Bluethroat	<u><i>Luscinia svecica</i></u>
Northern Wheatear	<u><i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i></u>

**PASSERIFORMES: Cinclidae**

American Dipper	<u><i>Cinclus mexicanus</i></u>
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**PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae**

Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<u><i>Motacilla t. tschutschensis</i></u>
American Pipit	<u><i>Anthus rubescens</i></u>

**PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae**

Pine Grosbeak	<u><i>Pinicola enucleator</i></u>
Common Redpoll	<u><i>Acanthis flammea</i></u>
Arctic Redpoll	<u><i>Acanthis hornemanni</i></u>
Two-barred Crossbill	<u><i>Loxia leucoptera</i></u>



Pine Siskin

*Spinus pinus*

**PASSERIFORMES: Calcariidae**

Lapland Longspur

*Calcarius lapponicus*

Snow Bunting

*Plectrophenax nivalis*

**PASSERIFORMES: Passerellidae**

Red Fox Sparrow

*Passerella iliaca*

Sooty Fox Sparrow

*Passerella unalaschcensis*

Song Sparrow

*Melospiza melodia*

Lincoln's Sparrow

*Melospiza lincolni*

White-crowned Sparrow

*Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Golden-crowned Sparrow

*Zonotrichia atricapilla*

Dark-eyed (Slate-coloured) Junco

*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*

Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco

*Junco hyemalis cismontanus*

Savannah Sparrow

*Passerculus sandwichensis*

American Tree Sparrow

*Spizelloides arborea*

**PASSERIFORMES: Icteridae**

Rusty Blackbird

*Euphagus carolinus*

**PASSERIFORMES: Parulidae**

Northern Waterthrush

*Parkesia noveboracensis*

Orange-crowned Warbler

*Leiothlypis celata*

American Yellow Warbler

*Setophaga aestiva*

Blackpoll Warbler

*Setophaga striata*

Myrtle Warbler

*Setophaga coronata*

Townsend's Warbler

*Setophaga townsendi*

Wilson's Warbler

*Cardellina pusilla*



Steller's Eider - Barrow

## MAMMALS

Snowshoe Hare	<i>Lepus americanus</i>
Alaskan (Tundra) Hare	<i>Lepus othus</i>
Arctic Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus parryii</i>
American Red Squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
American Beaver	<i>Castor canadensis</i>
Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>
Brown Lemming	<i>Lemmus trimucronatus</i>
North American Porcupine	<i>Erithizon dorsatum</i>
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
Grizzly Bear	<i>Ursus actos</i>
Black Bear	<i>Ursus americanus</i>
Northern (Steller's) Sea-Lion	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>
Harbour (Common) Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>
Bearded Seal	<i>Erignathus barbatus</i>
Northern River Otter	<i>Lutra canadensis</i>
Sea Otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>
Stoat (Short-tailed Weasel)	<i>Mustela erminea</i>
Walrus	<i>Odobenus rosmarus</i>
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
Grey Whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>
Dall's Porpoise	<i>Phocoenoides dalli</i>
Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>
Killer Whale (Orca)	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>
Caribou (Reindeer)	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>
Dall Sheep	<i>Ovis dalli</i>
Mountain Goat	<i>Oreamnos americanus</i>
Musk Ox	<i>Ovibos moschatus</i>



Musk Ox - Nome



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