

ITINERARY  
**ALASKA**

**Tour I**

*Part One: May 30-June 7, 2019*

*Part Two: June 6-16, 2019*

**Tour II**

*Part One: June 6-14, 2019*

*Part Two: June 13-23, 2019*



*Horned Puffins breed on the rocky coastlines of Alaska, including the Pribilofs. They are one of nine species of alcids we'll watch for on the tour, and they have a more northerly distribution than many of the other species, making Alaska one of the best places to see them. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Alaska tour:*

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

*Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:*

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

One's first glimmer of the immensity of Alaska comes as the airplane drops in for landing at Anchorage International Airport. There are towering, snow-capped peaks and the expansive flats of upper Cook Inlet practically beside the runway. And the sky in this far northern latitude seems indescribably wide and high, the air crisp and pure. The place is nothing short of spectacular! But this is not a national park set aside for its scenic grandeur, center of attraction for thousands of tourists; it's just the outskirts of town. Anchorage itself, a modern, thriving city, is insignificant by comparison, almost out of place in the wilderness of mountains, lakes, and forest that form the landscape all around.

In the shuttle heading to the hotel, one gets the distinct urge to jump out and start birding immediately as the spruce forests and bogs of Alaska glide by outside and breeding-plumaged Mew Gulls course over ponds beckoningly dotted with phalaropes and waterfowl. Red-necked Grebes? Barrow's Goldeneyes? And those scaup were probably a convenient mix of Lessers and Greater. Settling down a bit, you realize that this is the beginning of one of the greatest of birding trips in one of the wildest, most beautiful places on Earth.

Alaska represents, for many birders, North America's ultimate birding frontier. It is a prime place to go for a large number of species, such as King, Common, Spectacled, and Steller's eiders, Harlequin Duck, Gyrfalcon, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Aleutian Tern, Long-tailed, Parasitic, and Pomarine jaegers, Willow and Rock ptarmigans, Spruce Grouse, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Northern Hawk Owl, Slaty-backed Gull, Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, Bohemian Waxwing, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, Arctic Warbler, Snow Bunting, and many more. The bogs and tundra resound with the cries of displaying shorebirds, including American and Pacific golden-plovers, Hudsonian and Bar-tailed godwits, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Red and Red-necked phalaropes, Rock Sandpiper, and Wilson's Snipe.

The Pribilof Islands, nearly 800 miles from Anchorage in the cold waters of the Bering Sea, are home to 2.8 million seabirds! They comprise one of the most spectacular areas in the world in terms of numbers of seabirds and diversity of species. Standing at the edge of the nesting cliffs, one is surrounded by hundreds of breeding seabirds: Thick-billed and Common murre, Least, Parakeet, and Crested auklets, Horned and Tufted puffins, Northern Fulmars, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Red-faced Cormorants, and one of the world's rarest gulls, Red-legged Kittiwake. It is a thrilling experience that no North American birder should miss!

Denali National Park is host to migrating bands of Caribou, calving Moose, Brown ("Grizzly") Bears with cubs, Gray Wolf, and Dall's Sheep, as well as a fine variety of birds. With clear weather, we'll have spectacular views of snowy Denali, at 20,320 feet the highest peak in North America, as we venture inside the National Park boundaries.

Our visit to Nome and the intensely scenic Seward Peninsula offers birders the chance to witness the merging of two major avifaunas: the Nearctic and the Palearctic. We'll see Fox Sparrows breeding alongside Bluethroats and Arctic Warblers, while Eastern Yellow Wagtails perform their courtship flights above singing Yellow Warblers and Golden-crowned Sparrows.

Kenai Fjords National Park, with its icy waters, calving glaciers, and rugged snow-capped peaks, provide a home for the likes of Black Oystercatcher, Kittlitz's and Ancient murrelets, Humpback Whales, and Sea Otters. Far to the north, in Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), we'll try again to get good looks at Yellow-billed Loon, Snowy Owl, and all four species of beautiful eiders among the numerous displaying shorebirds that roam the flat tundra.



*White Wagtails are common in the Old World, but they are rare visitors to North America. We have a good chance of finding one of these uncommon breeders in the Nome area. Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

Our grand tour will take us to mainland Alaska's finest birding sites. Part I visits the Pribilof Islands, the Anchorage area, and Denali National Park. Part II visits Nome, Seward (including Kenai Fjords National Park), Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), and the Anchorage area. Our late spring-early summer schedule on the Pribilofs and at Nome gives us a very good chance of finding one or more Asiatic strays, in addition to the numerous cliff-nesting species and other regular breeders.

The arctic summer is a time of vibrant life, but there is an undertone of urgency, for the season's end is always in sight. June is a great time to be in Alaska, when the birds are in courtship and full breeding regalia and most of the insects are still underwater. This summer, head north to the arctic, to Alaska!



*A recent Field Guides group rests during a hike on the tundra outside of Nome. Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

**About the Physical Requirements & Pace:** The long arctic days of summer in Alaska are both a blessing and a curse. The extended daylight hours here invite birders to invest considerably more time in the field than on other tours, and it takes more than a modicum of self-control to get the rest that one needs on this tour. Having said that, we'll be offering (in addition to our regular morning and afternoon outings) a few optional after-dinner birding excursions in some of the areas that we will visit. Since Alaska is such a large state and our tour endeavors to cover many highlights, we will take in an extraordinary amount of territory and make good use of the available daylight.

In general, the terrain that we bird on throughout the tour is rather level and most of the walks are easy. Most of the short hikes that we do are less than one mile in total length, and are typically over mostly flat, but rather uneven, terrain. Obstacles such as logs and driftwood, old fishing buoys, tall grass hummocks, and rocks are common on our walks. Sometimes we'll walk across moist ground or at the edge of shallow marshes or ponds, and rubber boots or N.E.O.S. are very helpful for birding these areas. One notable exception to this generally easy hiking is an optional hike over fairly steep and very uneven tundra to search for the rare Bristle-thighed Curlew (should the road accessing its habitat be open) in the wilderness north of Nome; this hike typically takes 3-4 hours to traverse as many as three miles round trip. We recommend waterproof footgear with strong ankle support if you choose to do this hike. However, there is plenty to see and do this day on the Kougarok Road for those who opt out of the hike. Our boat trip out into Kenai Fjords NP also requires a good sense of balance and good waterproof gear.

Although we routinely request ground-floor rooms at all of our hotels, only the hotel on St. Paul Island is a single story, and only those in Seward and Utqiagvik have elevators, so you may need to climb a flight of stairs to get to your rooms in Anchorage, Denali or Nome.

Although we will be focused primarily on birds and mammals, we will endeavor to take in many of the spectacular natural features of Alaska. Much of our driving at Anchorage, Seward, Nome, Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), and the Denali area (aside from the main park road, which must be traversed via a park bus with a driver) will be in two twelve- or fifteen-passenger rental vans (or a van and an SUV in Nome). Our transportation on the Pribilofs will likely be via 15 passenger vans. While many photographic opportunities will present themselves, photography should not be viewed as our primary focus.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with one of the guides.

## About the Birding Areas



**St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs**—St. Paul lies in the cold waters of the Bering Sea some 770 miles west of Anchorage. In spite of the remote nature of this island, it is a popular destination for birders and others interested in natural history and Native American culture. Populated primarily by Aleuts descended from those brought as slaves to the island by Russian fur traders in the late 1700s and early 1800s, the small town of St. Paul offers visitors comfortable accommodations (with shared bathroom facilities), surprisingly good and plentiful food, and good transportation along the few roads of the island. For birders, the main attractions to this island are the huge numbers of nesting seabirds (at least eight nesting alcid species, plus such specialties as Red-faced Cormorant and Red-legged Kittiwake) and, to a much lesser extent, the island's history as a shelter for the occasional wayward Asiatic migrant. The Pribilofs are also home to the world's largest concentration of Northern Fur Seals (nearly 80% of the world population), whose rookeries dot the beaches and rocky headlands.

Volcanic in origin, St. Paul is a mix of marshy wetlands, lakes, dunes, cinder cones, grassy tundra,

ancient lava flows, and low and high sea cliffs. We should have almost two days to explore these varied habitats, allowing us an appropriate amount of time to study and photograph the numerous breeding seabirds of the island and to look for any Siberian vagrants that may be present. On one day, we may walk across a stretch of island tundra, through the beach dunes, or around the perimeter of a small lake. Walking away from the roads may involve traversing some moderately difficult terrain, but nothing that a reasonably fit individual cannot do at an unrushed pace.

**Denali National Park**—Save for the one narrow road winding its way through the park, virtually all of Denali's 5,695,000 acres comprise an untouched wilderness of mountains and valleys, of dark, spruce-lined rivers and rugged alpine meadows. We'll venture into this spectacular park on this road aboard one of the park service buses that provide the only access currently available to birders.

The wildlife and scenery of Denali are absolutely phenomenal! We'll be hoping for clear weather on one of our days here to view the incredible 20,320-foot high Denali, North America's highest peak, among the numerous (albeit diminutive by comparison) snow-covered peaks of the Alaska Range. Along with a number of bird possibilities such as Gyrfalcon, Rock Ptarmigan, and Long-tailed Jaeger, large mammals such as Brown "Grizzly" Bear, Caribou, Dall's Sheep, Moose, and Gray Wolf will likely occupy us during our thrilling ride into the park.

Our first and last days in this region will be spent on the scenic Denali Highway east of the national park. This unpaved road affords easy access to the many spruce bogs, rushing streams, lakes, and upland tundra that harbor the area's special birds, including Barrow's Goldeneye, Trumpeter Swan, Northern Hawk Owl, Upland Sandpiper, Arctic Warbler (typically a late spring arrival unlikely to be seen on the first tour offering), Northern Shrike, and Bohemian Waxwing. The scenery along this road can be spectacular!

**Nome and the Seward Peninsula**—Served by daily jet service from Anchorage, this once-remote outpost in far western Alaska is now easy to reach and offers visitors unexpected comfort. Our comfortable hotel in this former gold-rush town looks out to Norton Sound and provides us with an excellent chance to seawatch right outside our doors. Situated on the south coast of the Seward Peninsula, the Nome area is characterized by a mix of moist tussock-heath tundra and drier, upland tundra crossed with shrub-lined creeks. A few good dirt roads give access to large lagoons and inland hills as well. We'll travel these roads in search of the many specialties of the area, some found here more readily than at any other accessible site in North America. Among the many possibilities are Arctic Loon (rare), Gyrfalcon, both American and Pacific golden-plovers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Bristle-thighed Curlew (rare), Red-necked Stint (rare), Slaty-backed Gull (rare), Aleutian Tern, Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, Red-throated Pipit (very rare), White (rare) and Eastern Yellow

wagtails, and Hoary Redpoll. The Bristle-thighed Curlews have been found nesting in the central portion of the peninsula, and in order to see them (if they have indeed been seen in the area recently), we will likely have to hike, mostly uphill, some two to three miles round trip over very challenging tundra. The remainder of our birding will be done primarily from the vehicles and along the roadsides. Scenery in this part of Alaska is no less grand than in other parts of the state, and past clients have often been very pleasantly surprised by the extraordinary vistas on the Kougarok and Teller roads.



*We had excellent views of Kittlitz's Murrelet on a recent Field Guides tour. We'll watch for them on the boat trip out of Seward on Part II of the tour. Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

**Seward and Kenai Fjords National Park**—One of the many scenic delights in south coastal Alaska is the rugged Kenai Fjords National Park region on the southeast side of the Kenai Peninsula. The park and the adjacent Alaska Maritime NWR protect numerous seabird nesting cliffs and islands where many thousands of alcids and kittiwakes busily pursue nesting activities. The combination of thousands of seabirds, often numerous marine mammals, lofty snow-covered peaks, and brooding glaciers make this a spectacle not to be missed. Our all-day boat trip out of Seward and into the park should be one of the most memorable days of the trip. Some of the birds that we hope to see during our boating excursion include Pelagic and Red-faced cormorants, Surf and White-winged scoters, Black Oystercatcher, Black-legged Kittiwake, Common and Thick-billed (scarce) murres, Pigeon Guillemot, Parakeet (very local) and Rhinoceros auklets, Marbled, Ancient (scarce), and Kittlitz's (scarce and local) murrelets, and both Horned and Tufted puffins.

The tall Sitka Spruce and Mountain (Western) Hemlock forests in the Seward area are typical of southeastern Alaska and are home to a number of birds that we are unlikely to encounter elsewhere, such as Rufous Hummingbird, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Steller's Jay, Northwestern Crow, and Pine Grosbeak. The waters of Resurrection Bay at Seward support a healthy population of animated Sea Otters, which can easily be seen from shore near town and from our boat. And, if you're partial to great seafood, you won't be disappointed at dinnertime!

**Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow)**—The land near the far-northern town of Utqiagvik is a flat, watery expanse in the grip of permafrost, which in places is as deep as 2000 feet! The landscape is fractured into a maze of giant, ice-wedge polygons, a pattern resulting from the continual freezing and thawing of the surface of the land. The *aufeis*, overhanging shelves of ice formed by overflow waters of north-flowing rivers, look like rivers of ice from the air. And pingos, or "ice blisters," frozen hills formed by ice forced to expand upward in drained depressions, contribute further to the unique and fascinating aspect of Alaska's North Slope. Our flight takes us over 570 miles of northern Alaska and leaves us on the coast of the Arctic Ocean at 71 degrees 20 minutes North latitude, more than 300 miles above the Arctic Circle! Clearly, Point Barrow, the northernmost point in Alaska, is off the beaten track. This is not hard to understand, for Utqiagvik is a place of extremes, where the summer sun does not sink below the horizon for 67 days straight (and it is not dark for another 52 days!), the sun does not shine on the town for 67 days straight in the winter, the weather is calm only 1% of the year, and annual precipitation (rain and snow combined) is a meager 5 to 8 inches, the lowest in Alaska.

Although such a harsh place would surely seem unable to support many birds, the landscape here swarms with a variety of breeding shorebirds, waterfowl, and others. It is also home to two of the rarest birds of the Far North—the endangered Spectacled and Steller's eiders. Populations of these gaudy ducks have plummeted in recent years, and

each year we anxiously hold our collective breath until finding them here. We hope our good fortune will continue. During our search for the eiders, we will likely encounter a number of other species as well, including Red-throated, Pacific, and Yellow-billed loons, King Eider, Pectoral and Baird's sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Black Guillemot, Snowy Owl, and Hoary Redpoll. Most of our birding here will be from our vehicles or along the roadside, with an occasional foray across the tundra. We also include an afternoon or evening foray to Pt. Barrow to search for Polar Bear, as well as some productive birding at this unique locale (should our local guiding service there be available). Temperatures here are likely to be the coldest of the trip, ranging down to the teens or 20s with wind chill factored in (it's often warmer just a few miles inland).

**Anchorage**, the largest city in Alaska, is our base between excursions to the more remote areas of the state. Situated between Cook Inlet and the rugged Chugach Mountains, Anchorage features several small parks and reserves in and near town that we will likely visit during our stay. Westchester Lagoon is the centerpiece of a small but busy city park that offers a good introduction to the breeding waterbirds of the area and also visual access to the extensive mudflats of Cook Inlet. Potter Marsh, just south of town, has some of the same birds but also harbors a few species not frequently found at Westchester. The numerous parks in town and just outside harbor species typical of south coastal Alaska, including Black-backed (rare) and American Three-toed woodpeckers, Varied Thrush, and White-winged Crossbill.



*We will look for Black-backed Woodpecker in the forests near Anchorage. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

## Itinerary for Alaska

***TOUR I, Part One—May 30-June 7, 2019***

***TOUR II, Part One—June 6-14, 2019***

**Day 1, Thu. Arrival in Anchorage.** If we are not ticketing your flight, please be sure to inform our office of your flight number and arrival time into Anchorage. Please take the hotel's courtesy van to the Coast International Hotel; you'll need to call the hotel after you claim your luggage. **We plan to gather in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for dinner.** Night in Anchorage.

**Day 2, Fri. To the Pribilofs.** After breakfast and a bit of birding at the hotel, we'll head over to the airport to check in for the mid-day flight to the Pribilofs. After landing on the island and checking into our rooms at the airport hotel, we will head out for some birding, enjoying the characteristic breeding birds of the Pribilof Islands. Some of the common birds that we'll surely see on our first outings include Long-tailed (Oldsquaw) and Harlequin ducks, Rock Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, both species of kittiwakes, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (the large island subspecies *umbrina*). We'll also view one of St. Paul's numerous Northern Fur Seal rookeries near town. Please be prepared for brisk temperatures (35-45 degrees F) and the possibility of light rain and gusting, cold wind when we arrive

on the island. Sturdy, waterproof hiking boots are highly recommended during our entire stay on the island (along with rubber boots or N.E.O.S. carried on the bus for use when needed). Night on St. Paul Island.

**Day 3, Sat. St. Paul Island.** We'll have all day today to explore the various seabird rookeries on St. Paul, which will give us a decent chance for clear weather while providing ample time to ensure excellent studies of all resident birds. And with a measure of good luck, we may turn up one or more Asiatic strays (the first half of June is excellent for this). We'll spend our morning (after breakfast) in the field, come back to town for lunch, and then head back out for the afternoon. We will also offer an after-dinner excursion for those interested. All of our outings will be done in 15-passenger vans. During our stay, depending on up-to-date reports, we may offer an extended hike over a difficult, ancient lava flow to search for the rare and local McKay's Bunting. All of our meals (which are surprisingly good and fresh) will be eaten at a cafeteria-style restaurant located in town. Night on St. Paul Island.

**Day 4, Sun. St. Paul Island; evening flight to Anchorage.** Today we will track down any species that are still eluding us and check the lagoons and marshes near town for any rarities or migrants that may have blown in during the night. After lunch, we'll board our flight to the mainland, transferring to our Anchorage hotel late this evening. Night in Anchorage.



*Our visit to Denali National Park will let us get exceptional views of iconic large mammals such as this Grizzly Bear family.  
Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Day 5, Mon. Anchorage to Denali National Park.** We'll leave our hotel this morning to search for American Tree-toed Woodpecker and crossbills before driving to Denali National Park to the north. Because we plan to break up our drive with several birding stops and lunch, it will likely take most of the day. Please be prepared for the eventual rain shower (possible on virtually any day of this tour) and a temperature range of about 45-65 degrees. Night near Denali NP.

**Day 6, Tue. Denali Highway.** After breakfast this morning, we'll drive to the Denali Highway southeast of the park. This dirt highway stretches from the town of Cantwell to Paxson, traversing a mixture of willow/birch streamside habitat, Black Spruce bogs, ponds, and a mix of wet and dry tundra. With good weather, the scenery and the birding on this road are outstanding. Most of our birding will be along the roadside, but we might make a short hike or two out across wet tundra to look for a target species or two. If we haven't come across a Northern Hawk Owl by now, we'll be sure to scan the treetops for this elusive bird today. We plan to have a picnic lunch along the roadside and dinner will be back near our hotel. Night near Denali NP.

**Day 7, Wed. Denali National Park.** After a restaurant breakfast, we'll head into the park for a full day's adventure. Upon boarding the park bus, we'll begin what is surely one of the most fascinating and scenic drives in North America. We'll be watching today for the likes of Golden Eagle, Willow Ptarmigan, Northern Hawk and Short-eared owls, Northern Shrike, and White-winged Crossbill. From our vantage on the bus, which will typically stop for just about anything that we wish to view, we'll be able to sample the spruce woodlands, alpine tundra, and the rocky ridges and escarpments that harbor Rock Ptarmigan, elegant pairs of Long-tailed Jaegers, and perhaps even Gyrfalcons. With luck we could get close to a Brown Bear or a bull Moose, and maybe even have the chance to view a wolf at a distance. We'll each carry a sack lunch into the park today, and we'll plan to arrive back to our comfortable hotel near the park entrance by early evening. Night near Denali NP.

**Day 8, Thu. Denali Highway; to Anchorage; or arrival in Anchorage for Part II.** This morning will likely find us back out on the Denali Highway searching for any birds that may have eluded us until now, such as Spruce Grouse, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Arctic Warbler, or Bohemian Waxwing. We will spend part of the morning on this road, planning to return to Anchorage by late afternoon.

**If you have just arrived in Anchorage for Part II of the tour, please plan to meet the rest of the group in the lobby of our hotel at 6:30 p.m. for dinner** unless there's a note at the front desk from your guides stating otherwise. Night in Anchorage.

***TOUR I, Part Two—June 6-16, 2019***

***TOUR II, Part Two—June 13-23, 2019***

**Day 9, Fri. Flight to Nome or departure for home.** Farewell to those tour participants departing for home this morning and welcome to anyone newly arrived for the second part of the tour! For those continuing on, we'll board our flight to Nome this morning. Depending upon the time of our flight, we'll either pack a sandwich with us (like we did on our flight to St. Paul on Part I) or we'll eat lunch in Nome at a nearby restaurant after we land. After checking into the Aurora Inn, our hotel in Nome, we'll make our way along the coastal road east of town to bird the coastal tundra and the Nome River mouth area near town, as well as the productive Safety Sound area about fifteen to thirty miles out of town for the remainder of the afternoon and into the early evening.

Our first afternoon here could produce such quality birds as Bar-tailed Godwit, all three jaegers, Slaty-backed Gull, Aleutian Tern, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, and Hoary Redpoll. Safety Sound is often an extremely bird-rich site and hosts impressive numbers of loons, waterfowl, cranes, shorebirds, gulls, and terns. Most birding will be along the roadside, but we may need to cross some wet tundra or marshy habitat to get a closer look at a suspicious-looking shorebird among the more common species feeding on the mudflats, so rubber boots stored under your vehicle seats may come in handy today. Night in Nome.



*Gyrfalcon is on many birders' wish-lists, and we'll keep an eye out for them while we're in the Nome area.  
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

**Day 10, Sat. Nome area.** After a picnic breakfast at our hotel in town, we plan to spend the entire day in the field today, journeying some seventy-five miles inland (if the road is open this year) on a good dirt road, and enjoying a picnic lunch along the way. A large percentage of our day will be devoted to the search for the rare Bristle-thighed Curlew, which will entail hiking as many as three miles over the tundra, much of it uphill and challenging even for those who consider themselves fit. We'll take this hike at a reasonable pace, of course, and we hope to encounter the birds early on. Even if the curlews aren't in the cards for us today, the likes of Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Tundra Swan, Black Scoter, Harlequin Duck, Willow and Rock ptarmigans, American and Pacific golden-plovers, Wandering Tattler, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, and Arctic Warbler will surely hold our attention! Night in Nome.

**Day 11, Sun. Birding Nome.** Today's birding will likely take us northwest of town on the road to Teller, where we could find Rough-legged Hawk, Rock Ptarmigan, nesting Black-bellied Plover, Red Knot, Northern Wheatear, White Wagtail, or even a Muskrat! Night in Nome.



*Spruce Grouse can be difficult to find, but we've had good luck with them on previous tours. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

**Day 12, Mon. Flight to Anchorage and on to Seward.** After a morning flight to Anchorage, we'll head south to Seward this morning, passing along Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet and some magnificent scenery en route. Time permitting, we'll make a stop at Westchester Lagoon before we leave Anchorage to search for the likes of Red-necked Grebe, Barrow's Goldeneye, Hudsonian Godwit, Short-billed Dowitcher, Bonaparte's Gull, Alder Flycatcher, or Rusty Blackbird. We'll make several additional stops for birding and we plan to arrive at our hotel in Seward by late afternoon. The trees are taller and the habitats become generally wetter as we near Seward, reflecting the increase of precipitation in this region of Alaska. Night in Seward.

**Day 13, Tue. Kenai Fjords National Park.** After an early light breakfast this morning, we'll board our boat to visit Kenai Fjords National Park. The trip is planned to last at least nine hours if the weather is good, four hours if not. Most of the waters that we will be visiting are sheltered and quite calm, but there are a few rougher stretches of open water. If you are

prone to motion sickness, you should take the necessary precautions before we board the boat today (or the night before, depending upon the preferred medication). Lunch will be provided on board, and hot and cold drinks will be available in the galley. If you are a photographer, be sure to bring plenty of memory cards (or film). Night in Seward.

**Day 14, Wed. Seward to Anchorage.** After morning birding near Seward, we'll slowly make our way back to Anchorage, making a number of stops along the way to search for anything that we still haven't seen—including, perhaps, that elusive Spruce Grouse! A stop at Potter Marsh just south of Anchorage might reward us with a fine variety of nesting waterfowl and displaying shorebirds. Night in Anchorage.

**Day 15, Thu. Flight to Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow).** After a very early bite of breakfast at the airport this morning, we'll fly far to the north, to Utqiagvik, crossing the mighty Brooks Range, north of which lies the vast North Slope. Upon arrival at this far-northern outpost, we will transfer to our comfortable hotel to check into our rooms. After lunch, we'll take one of three short roads that lead out of town. The Chukchi and Beaufort seas will likely be icebound when we arrive, so be prepared for cold temperatures (25 to 40 degrees F without wind-chill) during our stay. All of the tundra here, teeming with displaying shorebirds, is quite wet so rubber boots are a necessity. Since the sun never sets during the summer months, we'll offer optional after-dinner outings for those interested. Night in Utqiagvik.

**Day 16, Fri. Birding the Utqiagvik area.** Depending on local road conditions, we plan to visit all of the accessible birding areas near Utqiagvik, returning to town for lunch and dinner. Most of our birding will be from the roadside, but we will almost surely want to venture out into the wet tundra to scan the margins of ponds for the endangered Spectacled or

Steller's eiders or to get a closer look at a distant Snowy Owl sitting on a nest. If the opportunity exists at the time of our visit, we'll also want to arrange for our group to be taken out to the tip of Point Barrow, the northernmost point of land in the US, this afternoon or in the evening after dinner. This trip, entailing two to three hours of our time, offers a decent chance for viewing Polar Bear as well as another opportunity to look for such specialties as Yellow-billed Loon, eiders, gulls, Black Guillemot, or something truly unexpected! There's often a bit of open water at the very tip of the point, and migrant waterbirds sometimes seek refuge here. If nothing else, we can say we stood at the northernmost point in the US! Night in Utqiagvik.

**Day 17, Sat. Birding Utqiagvik; flight to Anchorage.** After a final hour or two this morning around Utqiagvik, we'll fly back to Anchorage, arriving in time for some repacking before dinner. Night in Anchorage.

**Day 18, Sun. Departure for home.** You may schedule your departure for any time today.

## About Your Guides

### *Tour I*

**Chris Benesh** grew up studying natural history in California, where he was inspired by his father to take up birding as a teenager. After earning a degree in zoology from UC Santa Barbara in 1987, Chris moved to Austin to join the Field Guides staff. Since then, his life has undergone a wonderful transformation. The intervening years at Field Guides have taken him to many corners of the world and across both the Arctic and Antarctic circles!

Chris takes an interest in nearly anything that flies, and you might catch him sneaking a peek at a passing aircraft or stopping to examine a butterfly or odonate. You might also notice him getting especially excited at the sighting of a rare or wonderful mammal (heck, he can get excited about a squirrel).

Chris's passion for education has led to his serving on the Arizona Bird Committee, leading the occasional workshop, presenting at birding conventions, and—we must add—thoroughly explaining in admirable detail the nuances of flycatchers to tour participants and colleagues alike. These days, most of his “down time” is spent at home in Tucson watching his two wonderful kids, Sean and Linnea, grow. Chris has been guiding Field Guides Alaska tours since 1992.

*“I would travel with **Chris Benesh** anywhere, any time. He is calm, pleasant, and good-humored. He is not only brilliant at spotting and finding birds, but equally brilliant at ensuring that every member of the group gets a great look at the bird.” B.M., Arizona's Second Spring*

**Doug Gochfeld** was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, and his interest in birds was sparked at a young age (he participated in his first CBC at the age of 7), in part by his father. This interest soon spiraled into a full-blown obsession for Doug for a few years before he abruptly shelved it, in favor of baseball, for several adolescent years. He picked up his interest in birds again a few years ago and once again became a dedicated birder (though when he's not roaming the habitats of his native Brooklyn in search of avian quarry, he still finds occasion to get in some baseball-related activities). Doug graduated from Binghamton University, NY in 2008 with a B.S. in Economics with a focus in finance.

For the last few years, he has been essentially a working birder, and this has taken him all over the United States. Doug was the swing counter (counting the Hawkwatch, the Seawatch, and the Songbird Morning Flight) in Cape May for two falls (2009 + 2010). He worked annually from 2011 to 2014 as a tour guide on St. Paul Island, Alaska (in the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea). He has also spent several months in Israel working on spring counts of migrant raptors. Doug is a Leica Pro Staff member, and he has been a regular leader at birding festivals in Texas, Ohio, Florida, New Mexico, and Virginia. He also co-led one of our Field Guides Alaska tours with Megan Crewe in 2014.

His strongest interests in birding are migration, vagrancy, and patterns of distribution. He has a particular interest in shorebirds, and he has worked in Alaska and volunteered in Suriname studying Hudsonian Godwits and Semipalmated Sandpipers, respectively. Alaska and the rest of the Arctic and sub-Arctic hold special places in Doug's heart, though he's also quickly falling for Neotropical birding as well.

*“**Doug** was truly amazing--in finding birds and in relating to me personally as a participant. He was patient and kind in understanding my lack of extensive birding experience and in trying to help me.” C.S., Arizona's Second Spring*

## Tour II

**Tom Johnson** grew up watching birds in central Pennsylvania. Interested in science and the outdoors from a young age, he became involved in a variety of field projects throughout his school years, including banding migrant landbirds and conducting point counts for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. He was fortunate to pursue undergraduate studies in biology at Cornell University, where he became even more excited to learn about systematics and migration while surrounded by the amazing ornithologists and birders of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Since graduating from college, Tom has spent much of his time studying seabirds off the east coast of North America while conducting line transect surveys from NOAA ships between Nova Scotia and the Bahamas. When he's not otherwise occupied, he loves to devote time to wandering, taking photos, and searching for vagrants and hybrid birds.

Tom has long been interested in sharing his enthusiasm for exploring bird identification, distribution, and migration dynamics; he is a regional editor for *North American Birds* magazine and writes a regular column on identification for *Birding* magazine. Perhaps most of all, he loves sharing his passion for the natural world with others out in the field, and he's excited to have the opportunity to do this while leading for Field Guides.

*"Tom Johnson [is] everything you would ever want in a birding guide. I have never known anyone who can get the target bird in the scope and ready for viewing faster... He hears the bird, scopes it, and we see it!" G. T., Spring in Cape May*

**Cory Gregory** started learning birds on flashcards at the age of three, but it wasn't until the ripe age of ten that things started to get more serious. Since then he has traveled to Central and South America, Australia, and all 50 states to try to get his fill of birding (and it hasn't worked yet!).

Cory earned a B.S. in zoology in Michigan, where he also worked for Whitefish Point Bird Observatory for several seasons. He then ventured to Iowa State University, where he earned a M.S. studying Long-billed Curlews in Nebraska. As an avid shorebird ecologist, he has handled more than 2000 shorebirds of more than 30 species.

After finishing school, Cory worked for several organizations as a shorebird ecologist and guided on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs of Alaska for the 2014 and 2015 seasons. It was on St. Paul that his dream of stumbling on a first North American record was finally fulfilled. Cory is currently based out of Missouri where, when not on tour, he pursues his interest in birds, butterflies, and dragonflies with abandon.

Cory has co-led Field Guides groups to Arizona, Cape May, Texas, Peru, and Australia and has a busy and wide-ranging schedule coming up for 2017-18 --from the US and Canada to Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, and Peru.

*"Cory Gregory ... is a world-class birder with exceptional sight, hearing, and bird knowledge. His personality is fantastic: very friendly, funny, witty, helpful." C. B., Maine.*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for the complete tour schedules of all our Alaska guides.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$11,625 (includes a \$250 combined tour discount) from Anchorage (Part I only—\$5950; Part II only—\$5925)**

**All fees include flights within Alaska.**

**DEPOSIT:** \$1200 per person (full tour); \$600 per person for Part I only, \$600 per person for Part II only

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** Tour I—February 6, 2019; Tour II—February 13, 2019

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$2245 (full tour); \$1050 (Part I) or \$1195 (Part II)

**LIMIT:** 14

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to

purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

**Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

**LUGGAGE:** Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The fee for the *full-length tour* is \$11,625 for one person in double occupancy from Anchorage. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 17, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 17, *all flights within Alaska as outlined in this tour itinerary*, boat trips, all ground transportation, entrance fees, baggage handling, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does **not** include your airfare to and from Anchorage, airport taxes, any taxi hire to or from the airport, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the full tour is \$2245\*.

The fee for **Part I** is \$5950 for one person in double occupancy from Anchorage. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 8, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 8, the flights from Anchorage to the Pribilofs and return as outlined in this tour itinerary, all ground transportation, entrance fees, baggage handling, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does **not** include your airfare to and from Anchorage, airport taxes, any taxi hire to or from the airport, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, breakfast on the morning of Day 9, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for Part I is \$1050\* (singles may not be available on the Pribilofs).

The fee for **Part II** is \$5925 for one person in double occupancy from Anchorage. It includes all lodging from Day 8 through Day 17, all meals from dinner on Day 8 through dinner on Day 17, the flights Anchorage/Nome/Anchorage and Anchorage/ Utqiagvik/Anchorage as outlined in this tour itinerary, boat trips, all ground transportation, entrance fees, baggage handling, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does **not** include your airfare to and from Anchorage, airport taxes, any taxi hire to or from the airport, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, breakfast on the morning of Day 18, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for Part II is \$1195\*.

\*If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$1200 (\$600—Part I only; \$600—Part II only)** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by February 6, 2019 (Tour I) or February 13, 2019 (Tour II)**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**TOUR LIMITS:** Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, the guide in training will be taking a seat in the van or bus. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides

Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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