

ITINERARY  
**ALASKA**

**Tour I**

*Part One: May 30-June 8, 2020*

*Part Two: June 7-17, 2020*

**Tour II**

*Part One: June 6-15, 2020*

*Part Two: June 14-24, 2020*



*Pomarine Jaegers are the largest of the three jaeger species. These predators breed on the high Arctic tundra, where they feed primarily on lemmings. We'll look for these impressive birds when we are in Utqiagvik.  
Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2020 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

**O**ne's first glimmer of the immensity of Alaska comes as the airplane drops in for landing at Anchorage International Airport in between snow-capped peaks and the expansive flats of Cook Inlet off the end of 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 beguiling mix 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 echo 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 Parakeet Auklet is one of 10 or more alcids we'll see on this tour.  
Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

The Pribilof Islands, nearly 800 miles from Anchorage in the cold waters of the Bering Sea, are home to millions of seabirds! These islands comprise one of the most spectacular areas in the world for abundance and diversity of breeding seabirds. Standing at the edge of the nesting cliffs, one is surrounded by hundreds of breeding seabirds: Thick-billed and Common murrelets, 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 Caribou, Moose, Brown ("Grizzly") Bears with cubs, Gray Wolf, and Dall's Sheep, as well as a fine variety of birds. With clear weather, we might enjoy spectacular views of snowy Denali - at 20,310 feet, the highest peak in North America.

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.

The icy waters and rocky intertidal zone of Kenai Fjords National Park provides 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 to get good looks at Yellow-billed Loon, Snowy Owl, and all four species of beautiful eiders (especially Spectacled and Steller's) among the numerous displaying shorebirds that roam the flat tundra.

Our grand tour will take us to many of Alaska's finest birding sites. Part I visits the St. Paul Island, 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.

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. The northern summer is a time of vibrant life, but there is an undertone of urgency, for the season's end is always in sight. This year, head north to Alaska!

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

### Pace and Physical Requirements of this tour:

- **TRAILS:** There is one long hike, to find the Bristle-thighed Curlew, on Part II. This hike lasts 3-4 hours; terrain is steep and uneven tundra, approximately 3 miles round-trip. Other hikes are generally shorter, but terrain may be uneven, with obstacles such as fallen logs, grass hummocks and rocks. Some trails may be in wet areas where waterproof footwear is helpful/ necessary.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** *Part II:* An all-day boat trip onto the Kenai Fjords may be rough, and requires a good sense of balance. Medication is recommended if you suffer from motion sickness. May need to climb stairs at some hotels. Travel will generally be in 15-passenger vans; you'll need to be able to climb in and out several or more times per day.
- **PACE:** Days will be long! Breakfast is typically between 6-7 a.m. and most evenings dinner will be around 7 p.m. On St. Paul, dinner will usually be around 5:30, and we'll have optional birding afterward until about 8 p.m. We will have optional birding after dinner until perhaps 11 p.m. in Nome and Utqiagvik. Some days we will be out in the field all day, lunchtime included. We'll have some long travel days as well; flights to and from the Pribilofs, and up to Nome and Utqiagvik. The day we fly to Utqiagvik will start earlier; time will depend on our flight.
- **ELEVATION:** We don't expect to spend time at any high elevation (5000+ ft) and do not think it will be a problem for any participants.
- **WEATHER:** In general, temps range widely, from lows in the 30's °F to highs in the 70's °F. *Part I:* It can be cold in the Pribilofs, temps of 35-45 °F should be expected, wind and rain are possible/likely. *Part II:* It will be cold in Utqiagvik, potentially down to the teens or 20's °F, with a wind chill. We will be birding areas that may be wet; waterproof boots are needed. Rain is likely; rain gear is needed.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but on occasion, participants must be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** You may opt out of the Bristle-thighed Curlew hike, and stay at the van or back at the hotel. You may also opt-out of the Seward boat trip, and stay back at the hotel for the day. It is also possible to take some time off when we are in Utqiagvik, on St. Paul, and possibly in Nome.

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.



*The endangered Spectacled Eider is a beautiful duck we'll look for at Utqiagvik.  
Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

## 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 lesser extent, the island's history as a shelter for wayward migrants from both Asia and America. 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 Asian 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 marshy 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 shuttle buses - the only way for us to access a large stretch of the park road.

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 20,310-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, Willow 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.

At least one day 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, 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**— Accessed 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 lovely hotel 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, 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, we will likely have to hike a hill 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 been overwhelmed by the extraordinary vistas on the Kougarok and Teller roads.

**Seward and Kenai Fjords National Park**—One of the many scenic delights in south coastal Alaska is the rugged Kenai Fjords National Park on the southeast side of the Kenai Peninsula. The park and the adjacent Alaska Maritime NWR protect numerous seabird nesting cliffs and islands that host many thousands of alcids, cormorants, kittiwakes, and other seabirds. The combination of thousands of seabirds, numerous marine mammals, lofty snow-covered peaks, and stunning 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) murrelets, 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!



*Orcas and Humpback Whales, Sea Otters and many pelagic birds, along with the stunning scenery of the Seward area await us on our boat trip to the Kenai Fjords. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

**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 the Brooks Range 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 declined 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 may include an afternoon or evening foray to Pt. Barrow to search for Polar Bear (very rare) if off-road vehicles are available during our visit. 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 visit during our stay. Westchester Lagoon is the centerpiece of a lovely 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.

**NOTE:** Due to availability at the hotel in Nome on the first tour, we will visit Nome at the end of the tour, and the order for the tour itineraries will vary on Part Two.

On Tour I, we will visit Barrow first, then Seward, and finish up in Nome. The same amount of time will be spent in each of the areas, only the tour order will vary.

Tour II: Part Two will follow our standard route of Nome, Seward, and Barrow.



*The White Wagtail is an uncommon summer resident of western Alaska. We've seen them near Nome on recent tours.  
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

## Itinerary for Alaska

**TOUR I, Part One—May 30-June 8, 2020**

**TOUR II, Part One—June 6-15, 2020**

**Day 1, Sat. 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, Sun. 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 °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, Mon. St. Paul Island.** We'll have this day 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 (although there has been no breeding for many years now). 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, Tue. 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.



*On St. Paul Island, we'll spend time at the seabird rookeries, where we'll find numerous alcids plus species like Red-faced Cormorant and Red-legged Kittiwake which are specialties of the Pribilofs.  
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

**Day 5, Wed. Anchorage to Tangle Lakes Lodge.** We'll head north out of Anchorage and then bird the Glenn Highway from Palmer east to Glennallen. On the way, we'll look for boreal forest species including Northern Hawk Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, Willow Ptarmigan, and more. North of Glennallen, we'll turn to the west at Paxson and begin our adventure on the Denali Highway. Because we plan to break up our travel with several birding stops and lunch, we'll be on the road for most of the day. Night on the Denali Highway at Tangle Lakes Lodge.

**Day 6, Thu. Tangle Lakes Lodge to Denali National Park.** We'll start today birding around Tangle Lakes Lodge, looking for the highly localized Smith's Longspur and other tundra breeding species. To search for the longspurs, we'll take a hike of about two miles round trip through the tundra – waterproof hiking boots or rubber boots are recommended for this hike. Later, we'll bird our westward along the Denali Highway towards Denali National Park. This dirt highway stretches from Paxson to Cantwell and traverses 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. The whole day will be spent out in the wilds of Alaska looking for waterbirds, shorebirds amongst the wetlands, and songbirds, perhaps including an early Arctic Warbler. The scenery should be breathtaking as we move through upland tundra and boreal forest! Night near Denali NP.

**Day 7, Fri. Denali Highway & Denali National Park.** After breakfast this morning, we'll back drive to the Denali Highway southeast of the park, where we'll bird the western end of the highway in pursuit of any missing boreal forest or tundra species. We'll also plan to visit the boreal forest and visitor center at the eastern edge of Denali National Park. 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, and we'll also search for songbirds like Gray-cheeked Thrush, Fox Sparrow, and American Tree Sparrow. We plan to have a picnic lunch along the roadside and will eat dinner at a restaurant near our hotel. Night near Denali NP.



*We'll spend a full day at Denali, taking in the wonderful scenery as we search for moose, bears and birds.  
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

**Day 8, Sat. Denali National Park.** After breakfast at our hotel, we'll head into Denali National 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 Owl and Short-eared Owl, 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 9, Sun. Parks Highway to Anchorage; or arrival in Anchorage for Part II.** After breakfast, we'll begin our return trip to Anchorage along the Parks Highway, with several targeted birding stops to help search for Spruce Grouse, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, or Bohemian Waxwing. We plan 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 7-17, 2020***

***TOUR II, Part Two—June 14-24, 2020***

**Day 10, Mon. 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 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.



*The rare Bristle-thighed Curlew breeds on the tundra near Nome; we'll make a special hike on the tundra to find these birds.  
Photograph by participant Holger Teichmann.*

**Day 11, Tue. 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 the Kougarok Road. A large percentage of our day will be devoted to the search for the rare Bristle-thighed Curlew, which will entail hiking three miles or more 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! We'll eat a picnic lunch in the field and will have dinner in town after our late afternoon return. Night in Nome.

**Day 12, Wed. 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, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Northern Wheatear, White Wagtail, and Muscox! Night in Nome.

**Day 13, Thu. Flight to Anchorage and on to Seward.** We should have a bit of time in the morning before our midday flight to Anchorage. From Anchorage, we'll board our vans and drive south to Seward, passing along the Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet and some magnificent scenery en route. Since this is largely a travel day, birding time in the afternoon will be limited to accommodate an evening arrival in Seward. The trees are taller and the habitats become generally wetter as we near Seward, reflecting the increase of precipitation in this region of Alaska. We'll eat dinner at a wonderful restaurant in the harbor in Seward (if you love seafood, get ready!). Night in Seward.

**Day 14, Fri. Kenai Fjords National Park.** After breakfast, 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, especially as we round Cape Aialik. 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 batteries and memory cards. Dinner will be at a restaurant in Seward. Night in Seward.

**Day 15, Sat. Seward to Anchorage.** After morning birding in the lush coastal forest near Seward searching for Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, Rufous Hummingbird, American Dipper, and more, 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 16, Sun. Flight to Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow).** After a very early bite of breakfast at the airport, we'll fly north, crossing over the Brooks Range en route to the North Slope. Upon arrival at the far-northern outpost of Utqiagvik, we will transfer to our comfortable hotel to check into our rooms. After lunch, we'll bird 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 °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 17, Mon. 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 possibility of finding 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 18, Tue. 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 19, Wed. 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** made the jump from a love of trains, planes, and automobiles typical of many 7-year-olds to an avid interest in birds after a close encounter with a Steller's Jay in the Pacific Northwest. This filled his early formative years with scouring the urban landscape of New York City for birds with his father. After a teenage break from all things avian, he returned to it with a vengeance, and he hasn't looked back.

His first birding job was as a migration counter at the legendary Cape May Bird Observatory, where his love of and interest in the dynamics of migration (of anything with wings, insects included!) was cemented. From 2006 to 2016, he worked with birds from New Hampshire to Arizona, and from Suriname to Israel. He has also spent parts of five years guiding in Alaska, the bulk of which was spent on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs (where he has spent well over a year of his life).

Doug's strongest interests in birding are migration, vagrancy, and overall patterns of distribution. Shorebirds and seabirds (and any other long-distance migrants, really) hold a special place in his heart, and he has done intensive work studying the breeding and wintering ecology of Hudsonian Godwits in Alaska and Semipalmated Sandpipers in Suriname and Brazil.

In addition to being on the New York State Avian Records Committee, Doug is passionate about spreading the gospel of birding and the outdoors, and to this end he participates in youth and urban birding initiatives and has guided at birding festivals across the country. His writing and photographs have been published in a myriad of venues.

Doug leads Field Guides groups to Alaska, Israel, Trinidad, Papua New Guinea, Australia, all over Southeast Asia and more.

## **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*, a regular contributor to *Birding*, and a member of the ABA Checklist Committee.

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.

**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, Oregon, Texas, Peru, and Australia and has a busy and wide-ranging schedule coming up --from the US and Canada to Mexico, Jamaica, Costa Rica, and Australia.

*"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*

*"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 ... 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: \$12,150 (includes a \$300 combined tour discount) from Anchorage (Part I only—\$6275; Part II only—\$6175)**

**All fees include flights within Alaska.**

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

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** Tour I—February 8, 2020; Tour II—February 15, 2020

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$2320 (full tour); \$1100 (Part I) or \$1220 (Part II)

**LIMIT: 14**

*“Beginning with our 2020 departures, we’ve added a day to Part 1 to provide better birding opportunities and a more relaxed pace for exploring the interior of Alaska. Our route on the Glenn and Denali highways will take us across a broad expanse of wilderness that will allow us to search for beautiful Smith’s Longspurs and offer an increased chance of finding Northern Hawk Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, and other scarce birds and mammals of Alaska’s taiga.”*

## 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 \$12,150 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 \$2320\*.

The fee for **Part I** is \$6275 for one person in double occupancy from Anchorage. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 9, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 9, 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 10, 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 \$1100\* (singles may not be available on the Pribilofs).

The fee for **Part II** is \$6175 for one person in double occupancy from Anchorage. It includes all lodging from Day 9 through Day 18, all meals from dinner on Day 9 through dinner on Day 18, 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 \$1220\*.

\*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 8, 2020 (Tour I) or February 15, 2020 (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.

**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, and emergency medical transportation. **Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance with InsureMyTrip ([www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com)) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. Please let us know if you have any questions about this. If you purchase the insurance within 24 hours of 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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