

ITINERARY

ALASKA: The Great Land

Tour I: June 1-17, 2024

Tour II: June 8-24, 2024



King Eider and Harlequin Duck are just two of the spectacular birds we'll see on this tour to one of the great birding destinations of the US. Photograph by participant Paul Beerman.

We include here information for those interested in the 2024 Field Guides Alaska: The Great Land 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

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- 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 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

Alaska is an unfathomably vast mosaic of northern wilderness. One's first hint at the immensity of The Great Land may come from the airplane on the way there, as you pass over several mountain ranges, each one bleeding into the next: The Coast range, the St. Elias Mountains, The Kenai Mountains, and even the famous Alaska Range—on a clear day you can see Denali on most approaches. Finally, the plane circles and drops in for a landing at Anchorage in between the snow-capped peaks of the gorgeous Chugach Mountains and the expansive flats of Cook Inlet. Anchorage itself, a modern, thriving city, is insignificant by comparison, almost out of place in the tapestry mountains, lakes, and forest that form the landscape all around. The sky in this far northern latitude seems indescribably wide and high, the air crisp and pure. The place is nothing short of spectacular!

After a short shuttle ride to our lakeside hotel, you might get the distinct urge start birding immediately, with Red-necked Grebes and Barrow's Goldeneyes dotting the water a stone's throw from the lobby, and those scaup you may see out there are probably a convenient mix of Lessers and Greater. Even with this excitement, you'll realize that this is not even scratching the surface of what's to come: You've made it to the beginning of one of the greatest of birding trips there is, in one of the wildest, most beautiful places on Earth.

Alaska represents North America's ultimate birding frontier. It is a prime place to go for a captivating mix of species such as King, Common, Spectacled, and Steller's eiders, Harlequin Duck, Gyrfalcon, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Aleutian Tern, Long-tailed, Parasitic, and Pomarine jaegers, Willow and Rock ptarmigan, Spruce Grouse, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Slaty-backed Gull, Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, 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, Red and Red-necked phalaropes, Rock Sandpiper, Western, Semipalmated, Least, Baird's, and Pectoral Sandpipers, Whimbrel, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe and more.



Alaska is also a great place to see shorebirds. Many species, such as the Western Sandpiper on the right, breed here, while we'll also have a chance to see vagrants from Asia such as the Red-necked Stint on the left. Photograph by participant Karen Fung.

Our grand tour will take us to many of Alaska's finest birding sites. We visit the Anchorage area, Seward (including Kenai Fjords National Park), Nome, and Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow) and end with St. Paul Island in the Bering Sea. May-June is a great time to be in Alaska: birds are in their full breeding regalia and most of the biting 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.

The icy waters and rocky intertidal zone of Kenai Fjords National Park provides a home for the likes of Black Oystercatcher, Kittlitz's, Marbled, and Ancient murrelets, Humpback Whales, and Sea Otters. Our boat trip here will get us up close and personal with one of the spectacular glaciers flowing off the Kenai Peninsula's Harding Icefield.

Our visit to Nome offers birders the chance to witness the merging of American and Eurasian avifaunas. We'll see Fox Sparrows breeding alongside Bluethroats while Eastern Yellow Wagtails perform their courtship flights above singing Yellow Warblers and Golden-crowned Sparrows. Meanwhile, diverse hordes of tundra breeding birds will be setting up shop for the breeding season across the Seward Peninsula.

Far to the north, in Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), we'll seek some of the northernmost arctic breeders, including all four species of beautiful eiders (especially Spectacled and Steller's), Snowy Owl, Red Phalaropes, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Yellow-billed Loon—and there's even a chance to find a Polar Bear or a Walrus. The 24-hour daylight and stark northern landscape will provide a memorable backdrop for our wildlife observations.

The Pribilof Islands, nearly 800 miles from Anchorage in the cold waters of the Bering Sea, are home to millions of seabirds! In fact, this is one of the most spectacular areas in the world for abundance and diversity of breeding seabirds.

Standing at the edge of the nesting cliffs, you'll be 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. There are also three endemic taxa that nest here: the sedentary "Pribilof" Pacific Wren, the *umbrina* subspecies of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, and the Pribilof breeding *ptilocnemis* Rock Sandpiper. It is a thrilling experience that no adventurous North American birder should miss!

Our late spring-early summer schedule gives us a very good chance of finding one or more Asiatic strays in addition to the innumerable breeding birds that call this vast wilderness home for a relatively brief time every year. This year, join these migrant birds and head north to Alaska!



The Pacific Wrens that live on the Pribilofs are a distinct subspecies. Photograph by guide Micah Riegner.

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.

Physical Requirements of this tour:

- **TRAILS:** There is one long hike in Nome to search for Bristle-thighed Curlews. This hike lasts up to 3-4 hours; terrain is steep and uneven tundra, usually 2-3 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:** 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. You 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 Island, dinner will usually be around 5:30, and we'll have optional birding afterward. 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, and we'll plan to eat a picnic lunch. We'll have some long travel days as well; flights to and from the Pribilofs, and up to Nome and Utqiagvik (the exact start times will depend on our flight schedule).

- **ELEVATION:** This will not be an issue on this low elevation tour.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures range widely from lows in the 30s °F to highs in the 70s °F. It can be cold in the Pribilofs—temps of 35-45 °F should be expected and wind and rain are likely. It will be cold in Utqiagvik, potentially down to the 20s °F with a wind chill. We will be birding areas that may be wet; waterproof boots are needed. Quality rain gear (jacket and pants) is required to comfortably bird Alaska.
- **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 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.

About the Birding Areas



St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs—St. Paul Island 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 Island is a mix of marshy wetlands, lakes, dunes, cinder cones,

grassy tundra, ancient lava flows, and low and high sea cliffs. We will have over two full 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 tundra, through the beach dunes, and around the perimeter of a marshy lake, while also pausing to scan the ocean surrounding the island. Walking away from the roads may involve traversing some moderately difficult terrain and marshy habitat, but nothing that a reasonably fit individual cannot do at an unrushed pace.

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—and there are many specialties. Nome is the best place in North America to

see several species that barely reach our shores from Asia. Among the many possibilities, some of the ones we'll seek include Arctic Loon (rare), Gyrfalcon, Rock Ptarmigan and Willow ptarmigan, American and Pacific golden-plovers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Bristle-thighed Curlew (rare), Red-necked Stint (rare), Aleutian Tern, Slaty-backed Gull (rare), all three species of jaegers (Long-tailed, Parasitic, and Pomarine), Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, White (rare) and Eastern Yellow wagtails, Northern Shrike, and Hoary Redpoll. Bristle-thighed Curlews are found on tundra 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. Birds aren't the only attraction here – there is also a great array of mammalian possibilities, from widespread animals like Muskox, Snowshoe Hare, Moose, and Red Fox, to less common Grizzly Bear, Alaska Hare, Caribou, and marine mammals offshore. The scenery in this part of Alaska is also rather grand, and past clients have been overwhelmed by the extraordinary vistas on the Kougarak and Teller roads.



We'll have a pelagic trip out of Seward to explore Kenai Fjords National Park, and to seek out special birds like the rare Kittlitz's Murrelet. Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.

Seward and Kenai Fjords National Park—One of the highlights of 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 boat trip include Pelagic and Red-faced cormorants, Surf and White-winged scoters, Black Oystercatcher, Black-legged Kittiwake, both species of murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Rhinoceros (and maybe Parakeet) Auklet, Tufted and Horned puffins, Marbled Murrelet, Ancient Murrelet, and our primary avian goal: Kittlitz's Murrelet. Marine mammals seen on this route often include Humpback Whale, Dall's Porpoise, Killer Whale (or Orca), Steller's Sea Lion, and Harbor Seal.

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" American Crow, Red Crossbill, 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 can be 2000 feet deep! 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 north of 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 roadsides. While here, we will scan the beaches and ice offshore for Polar Bear (very rare), too. 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).



We have a chance to see all five species of loon. The Pacific Loon is a common breeding bird on the ponds of the tundra, and we should get great views of them. Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.

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 which can host migrant and breeding shorebirds, gulls, and ducks. Potter Marsh, just south of town, is an extensive freshwater marsh that harbors a few species not frequently found in the middle of the city like Trumpeter Swan and Rusty Blackbird. The numerous parks in town and the boreal forest to the north are home to species typical of south-coastal Alaska including Black-backed (rare) and American Three-toed woodpeckers, Varied Thrush, Spruce Grouse, and in some springs, White-winged Crossbill.



The lovely Arctic Tern breeds in Alaska and the far north, and we'll be able to see these long-distance migrants as they raise their chicks before departing for the South Polar region. Photograph by participant Amy Padgett.

Itinerary for Alaska

TOUR I, June 1-17, 2024

TOUR II, June 8-24, 2024

Day 1. 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. Upon arrival at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, please take the hotel's on-demand courtesy van to the Coast Inn at Lake Hood; you'll need to call the hotel for the shuttle after you claim your luggage at baggage claim. **We plan to gather in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for dinner.** Night in Anchorage.

Day 2. Anchorage to Seward. After a morning of birding around Anchorage, looking for Spruce Grouse, Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, we will make our way south to Seward along the Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet and magnificent scenery en route. Several stops along the way may include Potter Marsh near Anchorage, areas along Turnagain arm, and some locations in the lush coastal forest of the Kenai Peninsula, as time and birding goals warrant. We have the possibility to see a fine variety of nesting waterfowl, Dall Sheep, Mountain Goat, Red Crossbill, Rufous Hummingbird, American Dipper, and more. As we make our way towards Seward, the trees are taller and the habitats become wetter, reflecting the increase of precipitation in this region of Alaska. We'll eat dinner at a wonderful restaurant in Seward (if you love seafood, get ready!). Night in Seward.

Day 3. Kenai Fjords National Park. After breakfast, we'll board our private catamaran to visit Kenai Fjords National Park. The trip is planned to last at least nine hours if the weather is good. 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. 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. The bird and marine life should be amazing, and the scenery truly breathtaking. Dinner will again be at a nice restaurant on dry land in Seward. Night in Seward.

Day 4. Seward to Anchorage. After breakfast, we will drive back north to Anchorage, birding along the way in search of forest and coastal species we may have missed up to this point. Night in Anchorage.

Day 5. Flight to Nome. After breakfast, we'll board our flight to Nome. Depending upon the time of our flight, we'll either provision for lunch at the airport or we'll eat lunch at a restaurant in Nome after we land. After checking into our hotel in Nome, we'll make our way along the Council Road which runs along the coast east of town. We will drive this road past the Nome River mouth and out to Cape Nome and the legendary Safety Sound, where we'll bird the tundra, lagoon, ocean, and riverine habitats for the remainder of the afternoon and evening.

This first afternoon around Nome could produce such quality birds as Bar-tailed Godwit, any of the three jaegers, Slaty-backed Gull, Aleutian Tern, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, and Hoary Redpoll. Safety Sound is 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, so rubber boots stored under your vehicle seat may come in handy today. Night in Nome.



At Nome, we'll be watching for any rarities that might be present. In 2023, our second tour lucked into this marvelous view of both Stejneger's (left) and White-winged (right) scoters, side by side! While this year we may not have this opportunity, it's possible we could find Red-necked Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit or other goodies among the many shorebirds.

Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

Day 6. Nome area. After a picnic breakfast at our hotel in town, we plan to spend the entire day in the field today, journeying over seventy miles inland (if the road is open this year) on the Kougarok Road. Depending on conditions, a substantial amount of our day will be devoted to the search for the rare Bristle-thighed Curlew, which will entail hiking two to three miles over the challenging tundra. We'll take this hike at a reasonable pace, of course, and we'll hope to encounter the birds early on. In addition to our quest, we'll keep our eyes out for Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Tundra Swan, Harlequin Duck, Willow and Rock ptarmigan, American and Pacific golden-plovers, Wandering Tattler, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, and Arctic Warbler. This route is also excellent for scanning for the uncommon Grizzly Bear, and we'll want to keep our eyes out along the roadside for Snowshoe (common) and Alaska (rare) hares. We'll eat a picnic lunch in the field and will have dinner in town after our late afternoon return. Night in Nome.

Day 7. Birding Nome. Today's birding will feature many of the same possibilities as the prior two days here. We'll likely head northwest of town on the road toward Teller. Here we might find Rock Ptarmigan, Northern Wheatear, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl, American Dipper, and mammals such as Beaver, Grizzly Bear, and Muskox. Night in Nome.

Day 8. Birding Nome; flight to Anchorage. After a final hour or two this morning around Nome, we'll fly back to Anchorage, arriving in time for some repacking before dinner. Night in Anchorage.

Day 9. Anchorage. We'll have another full day to explore the mainland around the greater Anchorage area to search for the boreal forest and Cook Inlet specialties that are easiest along our route here. Some of these may include American Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers, Hudsonian Godwit, crossbills (numbers vary year to year), and the often-elusive Spruce Grouse. Be prepared for the potential for rain showers (possible on virtually any day of this tour) and a temperature range of 45-70 degrees F. Night in Anchorage.



*The cryptic Spruce Grouse can be difficult to find, but we've had good luck in the Anchorage region.
Photograph by participant Steve Rannels.*

Day 10. Flight to Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow). Our flight crosses 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. This afternoon, we will bird one of the 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 (20 to 45 °F without wind-chill) during our stay. All of the tundra here, teeming with displaying shorebirds, is quite wet so waterproof footwear (eg. rubber boots) is 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 11. 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 likely take some short walks (where allowed) along the gravelly beach or in wet tundra to scan the margins of ponds for shorebirds and ducks, including the endangered Spectacled or Steller's eiders. We will also spend some time scanning the ice for seals, Polar Bear (rare) and even Walrus (rare). Night in Utqiagvik.

Day 12. Birding Utqiagvik; flight to Anchorage. After a final morning around the dynamic tundra of Utqiagvik, we'll fly back to Anchorage in the early afternoon, arriving in time for dinner. Night in Anchorage.

Day 13. To the Pribilofs. After breakfast, we'll head over to the airport to check in for the mid-day flight to St. Paul Island. 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 likely see on our first outings include Long-tailed and Harlequin ducks, Rock Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, both species of kittiwake, 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.



*St. Paul Island is a breeding place for many species of seabirds, including the charming Tufted Puffin.
Photograph by participant Holger Teichmann.*

Days 14 and 15. St. Paul Island. We'll have these two full days to explore this remote island, visiting the various seabird rookeries, taking in the stark tundra-and-cliff landscape, scanning the mighty Bering Sea for waterbirds, and with a measure of good luck, we may turn up one or more migrant strays—late May and early June is a great time in the Bering for wayward migrant birds from both the Asian and American mainlands. We'll spend our mornings (after breakfast) in the field, come back for lunch, and then head back out for the afternoon. We will also offer after-dinner excursions for those interested. We typically travel on the island in 15-passenger vans. Nights on St. Paul Island.

Day 16. St. Paul Island; evening flight to Anchorage. Today we will have one final morning of birding on the island to either track down any species that are still eluding us, check the lagoons and marshes near town for any rarities or migrants that may have blown in during the night, or simply enjoy a last experience with the breeding seabirds. In the early afternoon, after we eat lunch and check in for our flight, we'll fly back to the mainland and transfer to our Anchorage hotel. Night in Anchorage.

Day 17. Departure for home. You may schedule your departure for any time today. **We highly recommend you purchase a flexible return ticket since weather could delay us getting off Saint Paul Island back to Anchorage.**

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). In recent years, scorpions have also caught his attention.

"Chris makes birding extra fun. His birding style and talent and good humor and helpfulness ensure a great trip for participants with varying levels of birding experience. I hope to travel with him in the future." A.B., Spain: La Mancha, Coto Donana & Extremadura

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.

Alex Sundvall is a proud Minnesota native and has truly loved birds all his life. At the young age of five, he took a field trip with his kindergarten class to their local Nature Center and learned all about birds. At the end of the trip, the class got to watch staff release a Dark-eyed Junco they had been rehabilitating, and from that moment he was hooked! With the help of his very supportive and encouraging parents, he learned everything he could about birds and birding. Even as a child, whenever anyone asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, he would always reply: “I’m going to be an ornithologist!”

"Alex was so delightful and kind. He was thoughtful and charming to everyone! He is smart AND accomplished; Field Guides is lucky to have him." J.M., Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country

This love of birds and nature has followed him throughout his life.

He graduated from the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences with a degree in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology with a double minor in Forest Ecosystem Management and Conservation; and Environmental Sciences, Policy, and Management. In 2016, Alex received the Young Birder Award from the Minnesota Ornithologists Union, and he has served as an alternate on his State's Bird Records Committee.

Growing up in Minnesota, Alex developed a passion for studying bird migration. In the past he has worked as both a Counter and Count Interpreter at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, MN. Even now, in his free time he'll often drive somewhere, post up for the day, and just count migrating birds as they pass by.

In recent years, Alex has led numerous tours across the US and beyond -- from the deserts and sky islands of the Southwest to the hallowed shores of Attu, Alaska, and everything in between. He loves teaching people about birds and showing them all that nature has to offer!

Tour II

Micah Riegner grew up exploring the Central Arizona Highlands and was fortunate to have parents who took him along on college field courses ranging from the coast of Mexico to the mountains of Costa Rica, where encounters with tinamous, barbets, and jacamars launched him into the birding world at a young age. During his time at Prescott College, he made annual pilgrimages to Amazonia, where he worked as a guide and participated in expeditions, mostly in Brazil. For his master's he studied the foraging ecology of Amazonian woodcreepers. When he's not in the field, he tries to make time to paint birds and other creatures that spark his interest.

"Micah is a great addition to the FG team - he was kind, attentive, fun, shared lots of his deep knowledge about Amazonia, and is an exceptionally sharp birder that gets folks on the bird quickly. And I loved that he shared his artwork with us."
M.C.; Succinct Suriname

Micah guided tours with Bret Whitney, John Coons, Dan Lane, and Tom Johnson before joining Field Guides full time in 2019. Micah is a generous guide with an easy laugh and is eager to share his love of birds and nature in the years to come. We know you will have a great time traveling with him, too!

Sam Wilson grew up in New Jersey and had his spark moment as a young adult visiting Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. On his first visit he witnessed an epic migration of 10,000 Broad-winged Hawks as they took to the skies over the Appalachian ridges. He was hooked, and his fascination with bird migration has only grown.

Sam spent four years working in Cape May, New Jersey, for New Jersey Audubon developing bird migration programs for school groups and families and leading group trips for Cape May Bird Observatory and New Jersey Young Birders Club. He enjoyed a stint in the Hawaiian Islands doing breeding bird surveys in the remote Alakai Swamp for the Kauai Forest Birds Recovery project (though his gear didn't recover!).

"Sam is an expert guide and one of the best spotters we've ever experienced. He was great to get us on hard-to-see birds. He worked well with all the participants and was knowledgeable about the birds and plants."
A.D., Texas Coast Migration Spectacle

Eventually, wanderlust led him to Alaska, where he led backcountry trips focused on birds and wildlife in Denali National Park, as well as guided trips for birding festivals along the Kenai Peninsula and Copper River. He has since led

group trips as a naturalist-guide in most regions of the country with a special focus on National Parks and Wilderness areas. Sam is an eBird reviewer in Alaska and contributor to both *Cape May Magazine* and ABA's *Birding* magazine.

When not experimenting with flight photography, investigating nocturnal migration, or researching biodiversity hot spots, Sam enjoys backpacking, growing super-hot peppers, discovering new music, and creating experimental dishes (usually Asian cuisine). Sam and his wife, Margeaux, have spent months traveling around the world seeking out rare birds and wildlife. They currently reside in Anchorage, Alaska.

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$13,075 from Anchorage (Fee includes flights within Alaska.)

DEPOSIT: \$1300 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: Tour I, December 4, 2023; Tour II-December 11, 2023

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional*): \$2275 (If we have too many singles we may have to double in some places. It is the case, you will be refunded a portion of the single supplement).

LIMIT: 14

Special Note about this itinerary: We strongly urge everyone to take out travel insurance (trip interruption) for this tour. Alaska is prone to flight delays and or cancellations, usually due to weather. We have tried to avoid this by going to the Pribilofs at the end of the tour (to avoid missing any other parts of the tour). We hope this will eliminate any issues due to delay or flight cancellations.

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one). Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

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 **tour fee** is \$13,075 for one person in double occupancy from Anchorage. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 16, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 16, *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 \$2275 (If we have too many singles we may have to double in some places. If this is the case, you will be refunded a portion of the single supplement). 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, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$1300** per person, or see our Payment Options at <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/>. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by December 4, 2023 (Tour I), or December 11, 2023 (Tour II). We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 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 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (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 that 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 airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. 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, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (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 information from us 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. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

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 thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

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 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. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible 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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MR 6/23

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