

ITINERARY

No Place Like Nome

June 26 – July 3, 2021



*The lovely Aleutian Tern breeds along the Alaska coast. We should see them when we drive the Council Road.
Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2021 Field Guides No Place Like Nome tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- 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:

- 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 for 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

During our spring Alaska tours, we cover a lot of ground across this huge state. Every year our guides and clients always yearn for more time in Nome, one of the most exciting places to be a birder in North America. Starting in 2021, we've decided to expand our Alaska tour offerings to include a longer visit to Nome and the surrounding Seward Peninsula. With a full week here at the northwestern corner of the continent, we'll have more time to explore lesser known birding sites in depth and linger with ephemeral migrants and breeding bird phenomena -- but don't worry, we'll also pursue typical spring Nome highlights such as Bristle-thighed Curlews, Arctic Loons, Aleutian Terns, Musko, and more.

On this new itinerary, we plan to survey all three of the major roads in the Nome area (Nome-Teller Highway, Kougarok Road, and Council Road), extending the reach of our birding to the settlements of Teller and Council - farther than we're usually able to venture during our regular spring Alaska tours. This will enhance our chances of finding White Wagtails (Teller area), breeding shorebirds of rocky montane habitats (Red Knot, Rock Sandpiper, and more), and boreal species such as Spruce Grouse that narrowly make it to the Council area in a belt of spruce forest. Of course, this

expanded route will give us more chances to study the regular avifauna of the Seward peninsula as well. And perhaps we'll even stumble into a rarity like a Red-throated Pipit, Great Knot, or Lesser Sand-Plover!

In order to keep tabs on the pulse of spring migration (which lasts all month in Nome), we'll make regular visits to the legendary Nome River Mouth and Safety Sound Lagoon, dynamic coastal sites that often see a great deal of turnover as migrants and breeders move through with the ebb and flow of the tides. Emperor Geese, Red-necked Stints, Slaty-backed Gulls, and other surprises hide amongst the legions of regular migrants and breeding species here. Seawatching will help us search for uncommon oceanic visitors to the area -- perhaps Short-tailed Shearwaters or a Kittlitz's Murrelet will be on offer. The more relaxed pace of this tour will give us plenty of time for goodies to pass by along the coast of Norton Sound.

Whether you've never been to the Far North before and you're looking for an enjoyable kickoff to your Alaska birding experience, or you've birded Nome and dream of a return visit, consider joining us for a week in one of America's most invigorating birding hotspots.



In addition to the wonderful bird-life we'll see some great mammals, such as this Musk Ox. These relics of the Pleistocene were reintroduced to Alaska, and are doing quite well. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

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 Curlews off the Kougark Road. This hike typically lasts 3-4 hours; terrain is steep and uneven tundra, approximately 3 miles round-trip. Most of our other birding will be along roadsides, flat coastal tundra, or rocky beaches; however, we may choose to head out into uneven tundra or riverine habitats, too.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Our hotel in Nome does not have an elevator, so be prepared for walking up/ down a flight of stairs. Road travel will generally be in a 15-passenger van; you'll need to be able to climb in and out several or more times per day, and Nome roads are notoriously dusty.
- **PACE:** Days will be long, but we intend to move at a somewhat more relaxed pace than our regular Alaska tour since we'll be in Nome for nearly a week instead of just 3 nights. Breakfast is typically between 6-7 a.m. and most evenings, dinner will be around 7 p.m. Some days we will be out in the field all day, lunchtime included, and we'll

pack a picnic lunch. On other days we'll have time to fit in an early afternoon break to make sure we're well-rested for the highly productive morning and evening hours.

- **ELEVATION:** Since we are in a coastal area (even in the hills outside of Nome), elevation will not be a problem on this tour.
- **WEATHER:** In general, temps range widely, from lows in the 30s °F to highs in the 70s °F, so it is a good idea to bring layers that can be rearranged if needed. We will be birding areas that may be wet; waterproof boots are needed, though in most cases around Nome, hiking boots with support are the preferred footwear (if you bring rubber boots, they can easily be stored under the van seats). Rain is possible and wind is likely; outerwear is simply a requirement for birding in 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:** When in and around the town of Nome, we'll stop by our hotel to use modern indoor restrooms, but when we're out of town, you'll need to be prepared to go "out in the wild".
- **OPTING OUT:** You may opt out of any days of the tour if you wish to stay around the town of Nome and check out the local scene. If you're particularly concerned about the Bristle-thighed Curlew hike (likely the most strenuous activity we'll engage in during the tour), you can either choose to stay at the van during the hike or back at the hotel for the whole day.

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



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 (detailed below) 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 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.

Council Road – The road from Nome to Council extends 73 miles out from the town of Nome, roughly to the east. This famous birding road allows us to access the coastal promontory of Cape Nome, the rich coastal lagoons of the Nome River Mouth and Safety Sound, rocky foothills, and even a portion of boreal forest. The coastal areas can be excellent for generally large numbers of waterbirds plus specialties like "Pacific" Common Eider and "Black" Brant, Loons (5 species are possible here, including rare Arctic and Yellow-billed loon), Parasitic and Long-tailed jaeger, Aleutian Tern, Pacific Golden-Plover, Surfbird, and Eastern Yellow Wagtail. Rocky foothills along the Council Road may introduce us to the

majestic Gyrfalcon, and boreal forest near the town of Council (an area we generally do not manage to visit on our regular spring Alaska tours) holds tantalizing possibilities like Spruce Grouse, Canada Jay, Varied Thrush, and Boreal Chickadee.

Kougarok Road – We will explore over 70 miles of the legendary Kougarok Road from Nome north to the Coffee Dome area. This road is perhaps most famous for the Bristle-thighed Curlews that can be accessed with a hike across hilly tundra, but the tundra slopes and riparian corridor along the road are also excellent for Gyrfalcon and Rough-legged Hawk, Bluethroat, Arctic Warbler, Common and Hoary redpolls, and much, much more. Mammals can be excellent here, too, with the possibility of Moose, several herds of Muskox, and perhaps even a Brown (Grizzly) Bear or two.

Nome-Teller Highway – Another 70 miles of dirt road extend to the northwest of Nome toward the coastal town of Teller. This route cuts through several river valleys and includes an interesting mix of coastal tundra, riparian corridors, and dry, rocky upland tundra. Accordingly, the birdlife is quite diverse. Breeding shorebirds here may include American and Pacific golden-plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Surf-bird, Rock Sandpiper, and Red Knot. This road can be an excellent place to find specialties like Gyrfalcon, Short-eared Owl, Willow and Rock ptarmigan, Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, and Eastern Yellow Wagtail. And in more years than not recently, White Wagtail have taken up residence somewhere between Nome and Teller (occasionally right in the middle of Teller, even!).



*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 No Place Like Nome

Day 1, Sat, 26 Jun. Fly from Anchorage to Nome. You'll take a late afternoon flight from Anchorage to Nome. Because of the timing of this flight, please plan to take care of dinner on your own (either eat in Anchorage before the flight or bring something along with you on the plane). Your guide will meet you at the Nome airport and drive you the short distance to our coastal hotel. Night in Nome.

Days 2-7, Sun – Fri, 27 Jun – 2 Jul. Nome. We will spend six full days exploring the area around Nome. We can expect to make multiple trips along the Council Road, Kougarok Road, and Nome-Teller Highways, with regular checks of the Nome River Mouth and Safety Sound Lagoon. Exact day-to-day plans will be at the discretion of the guide and will depend on weather and other local conditions, but we'll plan to enjoy an in-depth survey of the area's bird and wildlife offerings, with increased time to spend focusing on particular highlight species or events. On some days (like when we go all the way to Teller/ Council/ Coffee Dome), we'll take picnic lunches and plan to be away from town all day. On other days, we'll plan to take a break after lunch to help recharge ourselves for the prime birding hours in the morning and late afternoon/ evening. Nights in Nome.

Day 8, Sat, 3 Jul. Nome to Anchorage; depart for home. On our departure day, you'll fly from Nome to Anchorage to prepare either for onward flights home or additional post-tour time in Alaska.



The Bristle-thighed Curlew, which is considered near-threatened, nests in only two areas in Alaska. One is near Nome, and we will make an effort to hike across the tundra to see them. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

About Your Guide

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.

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Tom's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

"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

Financial Information

FEE: \$3525 from Nome

DEPOSIT: \$350 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: May 12, 2021

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$775

LIMIT: 7

Special Note: Tour fees may be subject to change due to the global economic effects of COVID-19.

We have published the itinerary and price for this tour with the understanding that during these uncertain times we are likely to encounter unforeseen changes. Travel and hospitality companies all over the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and there is no guarantee that all of the lodging and transportation we have booked for this tour will still be available at the time of departure. We hope to maintain our services as indicated in our itinerary as well as our published tour fee. However, if changes are required we will make every effort to maintain the quality of the itinerary as it is published with the most appropriate substitutions available. Should any necessary changes result in an increase in service rates to us, we reserve the right to pass on those increases in fees to the tour participant.

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: Please plan to arrive in Nome by 7:40 p.m. on Day 1 (Alaska Airlines flight #153, departing Anchorage at 4:40pm). Participants may depart Nome at 12:50 p.m. on Day 8 (Alaska Airlines flight #152, departing Nome at 12:50 p.m., arriving in Anchorage at 2:16 p.m.). 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 **\$3525** for one person in double occupancy from Nome. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 7, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 8, all ground transportation, entrance fees, 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 Nome, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$775. 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 LIMITS: Our limits are firm, however, on occasion, we will send a guide in training along on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$350** 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 **May 12, 2021**. **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.

Field Guides reserves the right 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, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a 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 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 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. 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.

NCP 7/2020
TJ 3/21; peg 3/21