



Field Guides Tour Report

Alaska II - Part One (Pribilofs & Denali) 2014

Jun 6, 2014 to Jun 14, 2014

Megan Edwards Crewe

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*

In a world that somehow seems smaller and tamer every year, Alaska is still vast and wild. The first half of our two-part tour to this great northern state splits its time (generally at least) between tiny Saint Paul island (a mere speck in the Bering Sea) and the interior around Denali National Park, where endless stands of birch and alder give way to equally extensive spruce forests studded with occasional patches of tundra.

Alaska's famously fickle weather proved largely benign this year, with our rainiest periods reserved for the days we traveled back and forth to Denali. Unfortunately, Alaska's famously (or perhaps I should say **IN**famously) fickle flights were less cooperative. We spent two long days sitting in the Anchorage airport waiting for a flight that most of us never got on. And while a lucky trio winged out to Saint Paul for just under 24 hours, the rest of us explored Arctic Valley and the wild and scenic Glen Highway. (While flight delays into and out of the Pribilofs sometimes occur, this is the only time I'm aware of in nearly 30 years of Field Guides Alaska tours that we haven't gotten our full group out to the Pribis.)

On Saint Paul, our lucky threesome spent a whirlwind evening and morning visiting the island's famous seabird cliffs plus a few noted hotspots where lingering vagrants had been seen. At the cliffs, a cacophony of sound and motion (and smell!) nearly overwhelmed:

Common and Thick-billed murrelets jostled on ledges, Tufted and Horned puffins guarded burrow entrances, Crested Auklets waved curlicue crests, tight flocks of Least Auklets swept out to sea and back or squabbled with their Parakeet Auklet neighbors, and Northern Fulmars sailed past on frosty gray wings. Red-legged and Black-legged kittiwakes bathed together in a freshwater pond, a pair of "Bewick's" Swans hung with their "Whistling" Swan cousin, an adult Yellow-billed Loon floated on the sea, and the first long evening was highlighted by the appearance of an Oriental Cuckoo.

Interior Alaska certainly has real visual appeal: those endless forests, with ranks of gray and purple and snow-dusted mountains rising behind them. Graceful Trumpeter Swans and snazzy Common Loons floated on lakes. Shaggy Moose grazed on roadsides. A Northern Hawk-Owl landed on a nearby spruce, glaring fiercely in our direction for a few thrilling minutes before being harried off by a gang of spluttering, anxious American Robins. Blackpoll Warblers and Northern Waterthrushes shouted challenges from treetops, Gray-cheeked and Varied thrushes fluted from roadside spruces, an Arctic Warbler flicked through roadside bushes and a pair of White-winged Scoters floated (snoozing) on a float plane lake. A pair of Bohemian Waxwings flashed over and lit atop a nearby tree. And our bus journey into Denali National Park, where Caribou sprawled on the tundra, Dall Sheep clung to impossibly steep hillsides, a big Grizzly gobbled berries and grass right beside the road, and Golden Eagles soared overhead, was capped by a superb weather day which allowed us to see The Mountain -- the **WHOLE** mountain -- for much of the day.

Thanks to some of you for coping with the disappointment of this year's failed attempts to get everyone to the Pribilofs with such grace and courtesy, and for continuing to find pleasure in the things we did instead. And thanks to all of you for your spotting and your fine companionship. I hope to see you all in the field again, somewhere, someday!

-- Megan



*Denali -- "The High One" in the Athabaskan language of the area's indigenous people -- rears its snowy bulk above the surrounding mountains. (Photo by guide Megan Edwards Crewe)*

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

- CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – Common at Westchester Lagoon (and other wetlands around Anchorage). All appeared to belong to the subspecies "parvipes".
- TRUMPETER SWAN** (*Cygnus buccinator*) – Our first were a pair in the same lake as our first Moose, and other pairs floated on a handful of the lakes we passed on our way to and from Denali NP or along the Denali-Paxson Highway.
- TUNDRA SWAN (WHISTLING)** (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) – One on Saint Paul island. This is the expected subspecies of Tundra Swan in Alaska.
- TUNDRA SWAN (BEWICK'S)** (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) – Two of this Old World subspecies hung around with a New World "Whistling" Swan on Saint Paul.
- GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*) – At least one pair on Westchester Lagoon, showing their distinctive white wing patches.
- AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Anas americana*) – Scattered birds on the first few days of the tour, including a half dozen or so on Lake Hood our second morning.
- MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)
- NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – Including a few floating on the back edge of Joe's Lake, along the Denali-Paxson highway.
- NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – Numerous pairs of these elegant ducks, sprinkled across the shallow ponds on Saint Paul.
- GREEN-WINGED TEAL (EURASIAN)** (*Anas crecca nimia*) – Reasonably common on the ponds of Saint Paul; males are distinguished from the next subspecies by the presence of a horizontal line on their scapulars. At least one showed a evidence of both the horizontal line of this subspecies and the vertical mark of the next -- presumably a hybrid.
- GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*)
- GREATER SCAUP** (*Aythya marila*) – A convenient mix of Greater and Lesser scaup snoozed on the island in Westchester Lagoon, allowing good comparison.
- LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*)
- HARLEQUIN DUCK** (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) – One floated in the bay, distantly visible from our vantage point along the trail at Westchester Lagoon our first morning. Those who made it to St. Paul saw scores bobbing in the surf around the stony jetties there.
- WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (NORTH AMERICAN)** (*Melanitta fusca deglandi*)
- BLACK SCOTER** (*Melanitta americana*) – One on the sea off Saint Paul, seen shortly after the Yellow-billed Loon.
- LONG-TAILED DUCK** (*Clangula hyemalis*) – Many, all in their dark brown breeding plumage, floated on the ponds and lagoons on Saint Paul.
- BUFFLEHEAD** (*Bucephala albeola*) – Those who didn't make it to Saint Paul spotted a pair diving on one of the ponds we checked along the Glen Highway. This species nests in old flicker holes!
- COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*) – A male shared Saint Paul's Weather Bureau Lake (at least briefly) with all those bathing kittiwakes.

Gaviidae (Loons)

- PACIFIC LOON** (*Gavia pacifica*) – One on Lake Hood for those who got up early enough to check before our second attempt to get to Saint Paul, and a few in ponds along the Glen Highway the following day.
- COMMON LOON** (*Gavia immer*) – One floating on Kashwitna Lake on our drive to Denali, calling to a second which flew past over its head.
- YELLOW-BILLED LOON** (*Gavia adamsii*) – An adult bird on the sea off Saint Paul, not far from where the Red-necked Stint was seen.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

- RED-NECKED GREBE** (*Podiceps grisegena*) – Particularly common at Westchester Lagoon, with a dozen or more floating on the main pond and one snoozing on a nest on the little island near the parking lot. [N]

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

- NORTHERN FULMAR** (*Fulmarus glacialis*) – Several pairs nuzzled each other on the seabird cliffs at Saint Paul, and dozens of others flew past various viewpoints.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

- RED-FACED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax urile*) – Many seen in flight, seen particularly well from the seabird cliffs on Saint Paul.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

- GOLDEN EAGLE** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – A couple of adults -- including one showing its golden head very well -- and a youngster along the park road in Denali NP, with another youngster over the Eielson visitor's center while we enjoyed our lunch.
- NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – Several coursed low over the tundra along the Glen Highway, and a male teetered above short willows along the Denali-Paxson Highway.
- BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – A pair of attentive adults with two fluffy chicks in a big stick nest were a highlight of our visit to Westchester Lagoon. Any fly-by by one of the adults certainly caused pandemonium on the lake! We saw other adults over the Glen Highway, and an immature bird over the Denali-Paxson Highway.
- RED-TAILED HAWK (HARLAN'S)** (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) – Our first were a duo (that coasted along the ridgeline in Arctic Valley. We saw others circling over the Glen and Parks highways.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

- PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis fulva*) – One on Saint Paul for those who made it out there.
- SEMPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – One snoozed on a scrape nest at the edge of the Turnagain Arm mudflats at Westchester Lagoon. [N]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

- SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – One flew -- stiff-winged -- across Lake Hood our first morning, then sat atop a wooden sign beside the water; good spotting, Cher!

- GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – A few along the Denali-Paxson highway. It's always a bit surreal to see a shorebird standing atop a tree!
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – A couple strode around a little puddle on the mudflats near the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in Anchorage, and we saw others along the Denali-Paxson highway.
- UPLAND SANDPIPER** (*Bartramia longicauda*) – Arg! We heard the distinctive wolf whistle of this species as we climbed out of the van -- and a few folks saw a couple of birds flying over high above us -- but sadly, they quickly disappeared over the rise and were never seen again.
- HUDSONIAN GODWIT** (*Limosa haemastica*) – Very distant views of a group feeding on the mudflats at Westchester Lagoon on our first visit. A few folks caught a quick glimpse of the group snoozing on the island near the parking lot -- just before the adult eagle flew over and scared everybody away.
- SURFBIRD** (*Calidris virgata*) – David and I had quick views of one among the godwits and dowitchers on the island in the middle of Westchester Lagoon our first morning. Unfortunately, as we started to climb out of the vans, one of the adult Bald Eagles went over, and the whole island erupted -- and the shorebirds fled over the train tracks and away.
- RED-NECKED STINT** (*Calidris ruficollis*) – One feeding along the edge of a pond on Saint Paul island, one of the last birds seen the first evening there.
- DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*) – One among a big group of Rock Sandpipers on Saint Paul island allowed nice comparison and we saw a few others among the peeps along Gaswell Road in Barrow.
- ROCK SANDPIPER** (*Calidris pilocnemis*) – Almost ridiculously common on Saint Paul island, sprinkled across every wetland visited -- and a fair bit of the tundra in between.
- LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*)
- SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – One on Saint Paul was a surprise. The whole group saw a handful of others among the taller Hudsonian Godwits on the little island at Westchester Lagoon on our second visit.
- WILSON'S SNIPE** (*Gallinago delicata*) – One on a telephone wire near the start of the Kougarok road gave us a nice view. We saw others along the Teller road northwest of Nome and on Nash road outside Seward, and heard many more in their winnowing display flights various places.
- RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – Many paddled in the ponds on Saint Paul island, with bright females tangling occasionally in fights over nearby males.
- RED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – Certainly less common than the previous species, but seen on the first evening on Saint Paul by those who made it to the island.

*Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)*

- LONG-TAILED JAEGER** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – Deb and one of the local guides spotted one flying off Northeast Point on Saint Paul on the first evening there.

*Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)*

- COMMON MURRE** (*Uria aalge*) – Bunches jostled on the narrow ledges of Saint Paul's seabird cliffs, including some in nice comparison with the next species.
- THICK-BILLED MURRE** (*Uria lomvia*) – Also common on Saint Paul's seabird cliffs. This species is darker backed than the previous (black rather than brown), and shows a white slash along the cutting edges of the beak.
- PARAKEET AUKLET** (*Aethia psittacula*)
- LEAST AUKLET** (*Aethia pusilla*) – Thousands -- make that TENS of thousands -- rocketed over the rocky jetties of Saint Paul, and many more fussed on boulders and ledges towards the bottom of the seabird cliffs. These tiny auklets (not much bigger than House Sparrows) can be quite variable in color underneath.
- CRESTED AUKLET** (*Aethia cristatella*) – Quite common on Saint Paul's seabird cliffs this year, where their all-dark undersides and distinctive curlicue crests allowed quick ID.
- HORNED PUFFIN** (*Fratercula corniculata*) – A few near the entrances to their burrows on Saint Paul's seabird cliffs, with others on the sea below.
- TUFTED PUFFIN** (*Fratercula cirrhata*) – Particularly common at Saint Paul's Reef Rookery, where they stood on boulders along the cliff sides or rocketed past offshore, looking big and black.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

- BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** (*Rissa tridactyla*) – Very common on Saint Paul, where they far outnumbered the next species. [N]
- RED-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** (*Rissa brevirostris*) – Lots bathing in Weather Bureau Lake on Saint Paul island, allowing good comparisons with the nearby Black-legged Kittiwakes.
- BONAPARTE'S GULL** (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Common around Anchorage, including dozens over the mudflats by the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and others sitting (incongruously it seemed) in spruce trees along the Denali-Paxson highway.
- MEW GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*) – Daily, with especially good views of those mooching outside the Alpenglow Restaurant during our dinners there, and of others nesting on the gravel bars in the Savage River in Denali NP. [N]
- GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL** (*Larus glaucescens*) – These were the big gulls on Saint Paul.
- ARCTIC TERN** (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Abundant across much of our tour route, though missing completely from the Pribilofs. The very short legs of this species were particularly apparent at Westchester Lagoon, where several birds perched on nearby posts.

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

- ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Regular around Anchorage and Seward. [I]

*Cuculidae (Cuckoos)*

- ORIENTAL CUCKOO** (*Cuculus optatus*) – A walk through the humpy tundra at Nova Scotia on Saint Paul island turned up trumps with a decent look at this multi-day rarity.

*Strigidae (Owls)*



**NORTHERN HAWK OWL** (*Surnia ulula*) – Wow! This was definitely a good example of persistence paying off. We heard a distant bird calling along the Denali-Paxson Highway, then got distracted by a photographer a bit further down the road. He was obviously shooting something: the owl, perhaps? Sadly not, and by the time we returned, the bird had stopped calling to. But we tried again on our way out (when we could hear it again) and eventually spotted it perched WAAAAAAAAAY across the valley atop a dead snag. Several minutes later, the robins in the area started squawking, and the owl swooped in to land atop a spruce very close to us; it stayed only a half minute or so before the angry mob drove it away, but it circled above the forest for a bit with its attendant robins.

*Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)*

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – Single birds flew over, calling, at least twice during our first day's ramble along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail at Westchester Lagoon, and most of the group spotted another staring intently downward from a roadside wire as we drove back to Anchorage from Denali.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – One zipped past while we birded along the Denali-Paxson Highway, and we spotted another from the park bus the following day.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**ALDER FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax alnorum*) – Our first was a calling bird atop a dead spruce tree in Arctic Valley, seen the afternoon of our second attempt to get to Saint Paul. We found others along the Glen Highway, and spotted one along the edge of the parking lot at Denali Viewpoint South.

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (*Sayornis saya*) – One sang from high up the hillside at Polychrome Pass in Denali NP, eventually dropping lower and lower in a series of hovering display flights.

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**GRAY JAY** (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – Little family parties in many places north of Anchorage, including a pair of adults with recently fledged youngsters across the road from our picnic spot on the Glen Highway, and some very approachable birds -- undoubtedly hoping we were planning to picnic -- at the Upper Chulitna rest area.

**BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE** (*Pica hudsonia*) – Common and widespread daily throughout the tour, though missing completely from Saint Paul.

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*) – Regular throughout, seen nearly every day of the tour.

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – A double handful over Westchester Lagoon, with others zooming low over Lake Hood the following morning.

**VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Surprisingly few this year -- just a few among the more numerous Tree Swallows over Lake Hood on our second morning in Anchorage.

**BANK SWALLOW** (*Riparia riparia*) – A handful in the swallow flock over Lake Hood our second morning. This is generally the least common of the swallows on the tour.

**CLIFF SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – A colony in the culvert under road at Seattle Creek (on the Denali-Paxson Highway) gave us the chance to study them as they zoomed in and out.

*Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)*

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Scattered birds around Anchorage, including a calling pair along the bike path at Westchester Lagoon, a few near the parking lot as we departed our Denali hotel one morning, and a pair with begging young in tow at Kincaid Park our last afternoon. [N]

**BOREAL CHICKADEE** (*Poecile hudsonicus*) – A little gang of a half dozen swirled through the big spruces near the parking lot at the Upper Chulitna rest area, and another little family group chattered in the trees beside the path at Hillside Park on our second visit there.

*Sittidae (Nuthatches)*

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta canadensis*) – A noisy bird flicked through trees near the path at Hillside Park, checking us out and periodically singing from open branches.

*Troglodytidae (Wrens)*

**PACIFIC WREN (ALASKAN ISLANDS)** (*Troglodytes pacificus alascensis*) – Those who made it to Saint Paul heard one singing in the quarry, but never laid eyes on the singer. [\*]

*Regulidae (Kinglets)*

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*) – Regular between Denali and Seward, including a fired-up bird showing its red crown patch on Rabbit Run Road outside Seward.

*Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)*

**ARCTIC WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus borealis*) – One flitted through tiny willows along the edge of the Denali-Paxson Highway. This species (which has recently been split into three new species, only one of which breeds in North America) migrates to Asia for the winter.

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH** (*Catharus minimus*) – After hearing these fine singers at various places on our drive up to Denali, we had nice views of several along the Denali-Paxson Highway.

**SWAINSON'S THRUSH** (*Catharus ustulatus*) – Especially good views of a couple in the spruce forests at Hillside Park. This species has a lovely upward-spiraling song.

**HERMIT THRUSH** (*Catharus guttatus*) – One near our picnic spot along the Glen Highway for those who didn't make it to Saint Paul.

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*) – Daily, often in good numbers. For those of us who think of robins as "suburban birds", finding them in the Arctic wilderness is always a revelation!

**VARIED THRUSH** (*Ixoreus naevius*) – A handsome male sang from a treetop along the road up Arctic Valley, and we found another at the Upper

Chulitna rest area en route to Denali.

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING** (*Bombycilla garrulus*) – A pair flashed across Joe's Lake (along the Denali-Paxson Highway) and landed atop a tall spruce near where we were parked; many thanks to my friend Ed Kwater (who'd just pulled up with his family), as he spotted them as they flew in.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR** (*Calcarius lapponicus*) – Very common on Saint Paul, singing loudly and floating down in little parachute display flights all over the island.

**SNOW BUNTING** (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) – A few seen the first evening on Saint Paul.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Territorial birds sang from treetops all throughout the taiga forest, including one on a big spruce at the Denali South viewpoint.

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Abundant throughout much of the state (though missing from Barrow), with far more heard than seen. We had particularly nice views of one along the bicycle trail at Westchester Lagoon our first morning, and of others along the Kougarak road while we searched for our first Arctic Warblers there.

**YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*) – Also common throughout, including a bright male at Joe's Lake (the float plane lake on the Denali-Paxson Highway) and a couple of birds chasing each other through the scrubby brush at the edge of Lower Summit Lake en route to Seward (seen while we tried to get better looks at our Lincoln's Sparrow).

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER** (*Setophaga striata*) – Regular in the taiga forests north of Anchorage, including several handsome males singing from spruce tops along the Denali-Paxson highway.

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER** (*Setophaga coronata*) – Daily, including a few singing from the trees around our Anchorage hotel and Lake Hood.

**WILSON'S WARBLER** (*Cardellina pusilla*) – Particularly common in the willows along the road up Arctic Valley (for those who didn't make it to Saint Paul), with others along the Glen and Denali-Paxson highways.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

**AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** (*Spizella arborea*) – A few singing along the Denali-Paxson Highway gave us nice views, as did some along the Kougarak and Teller roads around Nome.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Widespread and relatively common, including one flicking through birch trees near the bike path at Westchester Lagoon and a few singing from driftwood along the Council road east of Nome.

**FOX SPARROW (RED)** (*Passerella iliaca zaboria*) – One singing near the parking lot at our picnic spot on the Glen highway was cooperative. We had numerous others along the Denali-Paxson highway.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – Daily, with especially nice looks at a few quietly singing birds in the birch trees at the edge of the Millennium Hotel property. The subspecies in Alaska (*gambelii*) has pale lores; the dark eyeline extends only behind the eye.

**GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) – Several singing in the low willows near the highest parking area in Arctic Valley were confiding, allowing close approach as they surveyed their surroundings.

**DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED)** (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*) – Daily, including several singing around Lake Hood our first morning. By the end of the tour, most could quickly distinguish their song from the superficially similar song of the Orange-crowned Warbler.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

**GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (PRIBILOF IS.)** (*Leucosticte tephrocotis umbrina*) – Abundant on Saint Paul; this huge subspecies is endemic to the Pribilofs and Saint Matthew.

**COMMON REDPOLL** (*Acanthis flammea*) – Widespread across much of the state, though seemingly in fewer numbers than normal. We had especially nice views of some near the parking area at Byers Lake State Park on our way back to Anchorage; of course, we were hoping they were crossbills!

**PINE SISKIN** (*Spinus pinus*) – Small groups swirled through the spruces at Hillside Park and the Upper Chulitna rest area.

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## MAMMALS

**HOARY MARMOT** (*Marmota caligata*) – One ambled across the tundra near Polychrome Pass, then stopped to nibble on some vegetation. The species is named for its pale, grizzled fur.

**ARCTIC GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus parryii*) – Common in Denali NP, particularly around the Eielson visitor's center, where they were obviously hoping for handouts.

**RED SQUIRREL** (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – Several of these endearing little squirrels scampered around the grounds of our Denali hotel. You could see where their favored feeding areas were by the piles of pine cone bits left after they'd demolished them.

**MUSKRAT** (*Ondatra zibethica*) – One paddled across Westchester Lagoon.

**RED FOX** (*Vulpes vulpes*) – One sprinted toward our bus in Denali National Park, in hot pursuit of a fleeing Arctic Ground-Squirrel. It zigged and zagged and eventually caught the squirrel -- only to be dive-bombed by a Golden Eagle, which also wanted the tasty tidbit. Amid the confusion and ducking and diving, the squirrel got away.

**ARCTIC FOX** (*Alopex lagopus*) – Those who made it out to Saint Paul saw lots -- mostly brown and shaggy with molt - at various points around the island.

**BROWN (INCL. GRIZZLY) BEAR** (*Ursus arctos*) – Wow! One that spent long minutes grazing right beside our bus in Denali NP (before crossing the road right in front of us) was a highlight of our trip out to the Eielson visitor's center.

**NORTHERN FUR SEAL** (*Callorhinus ursinus*) – Those who made it out to Saint Paul saw scores loafing on the rocky beaches around the island. Most of the world's population breeds on the island.

**MOOSE** (*Alces alces*) – Regular throughout; the pair of shaggy girls feeding right beside the Parks highway -- and the one that loped in our direction

after being scared by the RV -- were particularly memorable.

**CARIBOU** (*Rangifer tarandus granti*) – Several small groups in Denali NP, including a few family groups resting in the tundra.

**DALL'S SHEEP** (*Ovis dalli*) – Surprisingly distant this year; all of the groups we saw were far up the mountainsides, resting like tiny white snowbanks on the ridges.

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## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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**Totals for the tour: 102 bird taxa and 11 mammal taxa**