



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Alaska I - Part One (Pribilofs & Denali) 2019**

May 30, 2019 to Jun 7, 2019  
Chris Benesh & Doug Gochfeld

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



*Denali in all its glory and splendour. We were privileged to see the top of the mountain on three of our four days in the area, and it never failed to be breathtaking. This image gives a sense of the vast wilderness that surrounds the Alaska Range, which makes it such an important haven for wildlife. Photo by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

Part one of our Alaska tour combines two regions which I think are up there among the most beautiful in my scope of experience on the planet. This year, both those places shined (even through some clouds and fog!) in a way that should give a sense as to why I feel that way about them. Everything ran smoothly, the animals cooperated, and we even got to see the top of Denali well on multiple days!

The remote windswept island of St. Paul was our first port of call, after a brief re-fueling stop in Bethel (Holy Cliff Swallow!) for our charter plane before it crossed the open ocean. Our two days on St. Paul combined several rare Asian vagrants with the magical ecosystem that thrives on this island. This included the Lapland Longspurs tinkling their meadowlark-like song from on high as they floated back to Earth, the groaning of the bull Northern Fur Seals that had arrived to defend their highly prized beachfront property, and the sheer rock cliffs with no fewer than eleven species of breeding birds in attendance, numbering into the thousands of individuals in view at once. Parakeet Auklets were the showiest of the auklets, though Crested and Least were around to amuse us as well, and Horned Puffin and Tufted Puffin split the billing as the most obliging of the puffins. This year also featured dozens of Northern Fulmars on nests, and a few Red-legged Kittiwake nests that were in full view, and at various stages of construction. The Asian birds were represented by Bean Goose, Eyebrowed Thrush, Tufted Duck, and an exceptionally brightly plumaged Lesser Sand-Plover. Flowers were starting to unfurl themselves in preparation for their short but sunlight-rich summer season, and the Wild Celery was already sprawling low over the tundra in many places. It was really a fantastic visit, but after two days it was time to head back to mainland, with the sadness of having to leave mingled with the excitement of the what lay ahead in the wilds of Denali.

The next morning, safely back on the mainland, we began our journey to the interior of the state, though our first birding stop was in Anchorage. Westchester Lagoon provided a plethora of breeding birds of several species, and all the interesting interactions that come with several species breeding in close proximity to one another. The mudflats gave us the opportunity to see Bonaparte's Gull and our primary target here: Hudsonian Godwit. We then headed up to the Willow Burn, which is an area of forest that was subject to a (human-caused) forest fire in 2015. This had calamitous effects on the human population, but also created an environment that attracted woodpeckers and one where they have been flourishing for the past few years. Here, in addition to Western Wood-Pewee and Lincoln's Sparrow, we got both of our target species, with great views of both Black-backed Woodpecker and Three-toed Woodpecker. The rest of our day was devoted to the drive north to Denali with some strategic stops that gave us Boreal Chickadee and Osprey, and our first views of the Alaska Range and Mount Denali, which was showing quite well on this sunny day. The next two days were spent birding the boreal, taiga and tundra habitats in the sprawling wilderness around Denali. Along the Denali Highway, the scenery may have been the star of the show here (did anyone ask for more great views of spectacular Denali?), but there were also plenty of birds, with the highlights including Willow Ptarmigan, Canada Jay, Harlequin Ducks, Trumpeter Swans, Barrow's Goldeneye, and a wide variety of sparrows. Our day in the park consisted of

being subjected to incredible scenery for several hours straight, and this scenery was supplemented with a wonderful array of fauna. In the taiga habitats we had several Moose, Snowshoe Hares, Golden Eagle, and Willow Ptarmigan, while the open tundra rolling into the distant mountains provided small herds of Caribou, more Golden Eagles patrolling the skies, and of course one of the main draws of the area: Brown Bear. We had a great experience with a family group of Grizzlies this year, which were foraging alongside the road, and then lumbered across the road so both sides of the bus could have stellar views. The park's mountain passes also gave us the opportunity to see multiple groups of Dall's Sheep, including a male looming on a rock-face right over the bus as if contemplating a jump onto our roof, a Golden Eagle nest, and a most-wanted Gyrfalcon! We ended up back in Anchorage for a sumptuous dinner the next evening, but not before doing some more birding on the way back, picking up Spruce Grouse, White-winged Crossbills, breeding plumage Red-throated Loon, and Bohemian Waxwing- it was a great way to close out Part 1.

Awe-inspiring scenery, delectable food, great company, and of course fantastic birds made this running of Part 1 an instant classic. We both thank you all for coming along on this adventure with us, and for providing such a fun social environment along the way. We'll see you next time, somewhere in this big bad world of birds!

-Doug (for Chris & Doug)

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## 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

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## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**SNOW GOOSE** (*Anser caerulescens*) – One of these was hanging around St. Paul during our stay on the island. It's a scarce migrant here, though perhaps close to annual.

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** (*Anser albifrons*) – We had one at Pumphouse Lake on day one, and then we had two there the next day.

The two on the second day were flying with the Bean Goose, and were absolutely dwarfed by the noticeably larger Bean Goose.

**TAIGA BEAN-GOOSE/TUNDRA BEAN-GOOSE** (*Anser fabalis*/*Anser serrirostris*) – We saw this Bean Goose on Pumphouse Lake on a couple of days. It had been identified as a Tundra Bean Goose prior to our arrival on the island, but it was clearly an intermediate individual whose specific identity could probably not be ascertained by sight. At some point these species may be lumped back into Bean Goose, which is how they were treated for time immemorial before the recent split.

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – The cryptic white-cheeked geese around Anchorage are included within the *B.c.parvipes* subspecies, though they are a constant source of consternation for folks who are trying to explain why.

**TRUMPETER SWAN** (*Cygnus buccinator*) – A few close experiences in the Denali area.

**TUNDRA SWAN (WHISTLING)** (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) – A rarity on St. Paul. We saw it on both Rocky Lake and at Tonki Wetlands.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Spatula clypeata*) – Westchester Lagoon and then around the Denali area.

**GADWALL** (*Mareca strepera*) – Westchester Lagoon and then around the Denali area.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Mareca americana*) – Tonki Point on St. Paul, and then on the way to and around Denali.

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – On the mainland.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – Abundant breeders on St. Paul.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (EURASIAN)** (*Anas crecca nimia*) – Many of the Green-winged Teal we saw on St. Paul were of this Eurasian taxon, but there were also a healthy number that showed characteristics of intergradation.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – The Green-winged Teal we encountered on the mainland were of this taxon.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*) – A couple of spots around Denali.

**TUFTED DUCK** (*Aythya fuligula*) – A beautiful drake on Icehouse Pond on St. Paul on a couple of days.

**GREATER SCAUP** (*Aythya marila*) – On St. Paul, in Anchorage, and around Denali.

**LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*) – In the Denali area.

**KING EIDER** (*Somateria spectabilis*) – A few small groups around St. Paul.

**HARLEQUIN DUCK** (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) – Plenty around the coasts of St. Paul and then a pair in breeding habitat along the river at Brushkana.

**SURF SCOTER** (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – On one of the lakes around Denali.

**WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (NORTH AMERICAN)** (*Melanitta deglandi deglandi*) – On a couple of lakes around Denali.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** (*Clangula hyemalis*) – Common breeder on St. Paul, where these incredibly charismatic ducks showed their bold breeding plumage, which is seldom seen south of their breeding range.

**BUFFLEHEAD** (*Bucephala albeola*) – Two females in the Lake Hill lake.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*) – On our second day on St. Paul.

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala islandica*) – At a few lakes in the Denali area.

### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

**SPRUCE GROUSE** (*Falcapennis canadensis*) – We did finally track one down on our final day.

**WILLOW PTARMIGAN** (*Lagopus lagopus*) – Good close views along the Denali Highway, and then some folks had another good one just below Polychrome Pass. Their vocalizations are hilarious.

### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**HORNED GREBE** (*Podiceps auritus*) – Nice views of some beautiful breeding plumage individuals at one of the lakes along the Denali Highway.

**RED-NECKED GREBE** (*Podiceps grisegena*) – Westchester Lagoon and Lake Spenard.

### Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – A few around Anchorage here and there. [I]

*Gruidae (Cranes)*

**SANDHILL CRANE** (*Antigone canadensis*) – We found a flock of nine of these feeding way out on the tundra in the middle of the island during our drive to Marunich.

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis fulva*) – Three of these in the middle of our stay on St. Paul, where they are relatively scarce in the spring, despite being abundant on southbound migration.

**LESSER SAND-PLOVER** (*Charadrius mongolus*) – WOW! What an awesome vagrant. This individual was found on our full day on the island, and we quickly followed up and obtained good views, and we saw it a couple of other times over the next day and a half. It was in gobsmackingly perfect breeding plumage, and delighted all.

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Breeders on St. Paul, and seen every day.

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT (SIBERIAN)** (*Limosa lapponica baueri*) – This Old World species is perhaps the longest non-stop flying shorebird in the world (it has the longest flights that have been measured by transmitters), with a breeding range that includes western Alaska, while wintering in Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand. One of these had decided to take a break at St. Paul during the final leg of its northbound journey to fuel up on Salt Lagoon's bounty of invertebrates.

**HUDSONIAN GODWIT** (*Limosa haemastica*) – A handful of these were on the mudflats off of Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres morinella*) – Seen on a couple of days on St. Paul.

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*) – Fantastic side-by-side comparisons with their lookalike Rock Sandpiper cousins on Salt Lagoon at St. Paul.

**ROCK SANDPIPER (PTILOCNEMIS)** (*Calidris ptilocnemis ptilocnemis*) – This Pribilof breeding endemic taxon is ripe for the splitting at some point in time. If that comes to pass you may see these awesome birds listed as "Pribilof Sandpiper" in the future.

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – We saw this low density St. Paul breeder on our final day on the island, at Antone Slough.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** (*Calidris melanotos*) – A calling bird flying around us at Pumphouse Lake on St. Paul, where they are a low density spring migrant, was a nice surprise.

**WESTERN SANDPIPER** (*Calidris mauri*) – One or two in various spots around St. Paul, including on Salt Lagoon.

**WILSON'S SNIBE** (*Gallinago delicata*) – Heard and seen displaying over the taiga habitat throughout the Denali portion of our travels. Their territorial winnowing call (created by the wind shirring through their tail feathers) sounds much like the song of a Boreal Owl, and is often mistaken for it, since the snipe get so high in the air when they are displaying that it can be incredibly difficult to locate where the sound is coming from, let alone to see the bird.

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – Abundant in all marshy wetlands on St. Paul. We had more than a couple of hundred individuals in our time on the island.

**RED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – These are prevalent in part two, when we get deep into their breeding habitat, but we had at least three encounters, including two very close ones, with this species on St. Paul. We even found a pair at Pumphouse Lake that was acting suspiciously like they were on the breeding grounds.

**WANDERING TATTLER** (*Tringa incana*) – A couple of encounters on St. Paul, including a pair flying around and loudly calling on our first evening at Polovina Point, and an individual or two on the kelp at Marunich.

*Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)*

**PARASITIC JAEGER** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – Three of these flew over the road to Southwest Point on our final day on St. Paul.

**LONG-TAILED JAEGER** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – We had Long-tailed Jaegers fly over on a couple of occasions on St. Paul, including a group of three that came off the sea and almost directly over our heads as we birded Polovina Point on our first evening.

*Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)*

**COMMON MURRE** (*Uria aalge*) – This is the less numerous of the two *Uria* species on St. Paul, but they still breed on the cliffs in reasonable numbers, and we saw quite a few.

**THICK-BILLED MURRE** (*Uria lomvia*) – The common species of murre breeding on the cliffs at St. Paul. There was a reasonably good showing of them on the cliffs this year, aided by the good early season weather.

**PARAKEET AUKLET** (*Aethia psittacula*) – The most numerous auklet during our time on St. Paul, they were reliable anywhere along the coast, and their raucous antics on the cliffs were endearing indeed.

**LEAST AUKLET** (*Aethia pusilla*) – The smallest alcid in the world, and the one that it took the longest for us to catch up with on the cliffs, as they seemed to not be in some of their breeding areas in numbers yet. We did eventually see a few on the cliffs though.

**CRESTED AUKLET** (*Aethia cristatella*) – These tangerine-smelling (really!) auklets are a boatload of fun, and we saw a few courting on the cliffs, and a few large rafts of them offshore.

**RHINOCEROS AUKLET** (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – A pair of them were on the water off of Ridge Wall during our cliff visit.

**HORNED PUFFIN** (*Fratercula corniculata*) – Stellar views on the cliffs on St. Paul.

**TUFTED PUFFIN** (*Fratercula cirrhata*) – Often viewed as the "best" puffin in the world, which is saying something given how awesome puffins are in general. Their elegant all-black uniforms make the blonde temple tufts stand out even more. What a rad bird!

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** (*Rissa tridactyla*) – Abundant breeders on St. Paul. After two summers of total breeding failure on the island, they finally had some success in 2019, which is a bright spot in an ecosystem which is overwhelmingly trending towards the alarming.

**RED-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** (*Rissa brevirostris*) – A Bering Sea breeding endemic, and one of the most range-restricted gulls in the world. St. Paul is THE place to see them in the US, and we were not disappointed by the hundreds we saw here.

**BONAPARTE'S GULL** (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – On the flats offshore of Westchester Lagoon.

**MEW GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*) – Seen on every day of the mainland portion of the tour, including on nests at Westchester Lagoon (including one absurdly close nest right next to the walking/jogging/biking/dog-walking path).

**HERRING GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – Seen every day of our Denali leg. They nest in the area around the lodgings, and so were flying around the town there quite a bit.

**SLATY-BACKED GULL** (*Larus schistisagus*) – Excellent views of a point-blank adult on our first evening on St. Paul, and then a couple of others at other points around the island.

**GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL** (*Larus glaucescens*) – The most common *Larus* species on St. Paul, where unlike in Cook Inlet, they appear to mostly be pure, rather than showing any hybrid ancestry.

**GLAUCOUS GULL** (*Larus hyperboreus*) – Immatures at Polovina Point and Southwest Point on St. Paul.

**ARCTIC TERN** (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Westchester Lagoon provided excellent views.

*Gaviidae (Loons)*

**RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*) – A few on a lake on the way back to Anchorage on our final day. We even got to see their red throats, a feature which is not visible on them during most peoples' encounters with the species (which typically involve winter plumaged birds and/or individuals at a great distance away).

*Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)*

**NORTHERN FULMAR** (*Fulmarus glacialis*) – The lone breeding tubenose on the cliffs at St. Paul. We got a great showing from them, with a couple of dozen visible perched on the cliffs and several more performing very close fly bys.

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**RED-FACED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax urile*) – This is essentially a Bering Sea breeding endemic, and we had some typically good views of the species on and around the breeding cliffs, and on the water at various points around the coast.

**PELAGIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – The scarcer of the two cormorant species on the Pribilofs.

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – A couple of these were haunting the river valley at the Denali viewing area.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**GOLDEN EAGLE** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Distant views of circling birds along the Denali Highway, and then up-close and personal views in the National Park, including of some individuals on the nest.

**NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus hudsonius*) – Encountered in several locations in the Denali area, including seen quite well from the bus inside the park.

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** (*Accipiter striatus*) – Circling over buildings near the Coast Hotel as we returned at the end of the Denali section.

**BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – On the way to and from Denali.

**RED-TAILED HAWK (HARLAN'S)** (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) – Soaring over the ridge over the dinner restaurant at Denali one evening.

*Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)*

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Seen from the vans while en route to Denali.

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER** (*Picoides dorsalis*) – One of our two main targets at the Willow Burn, we connected with a pair around a nest towards the end of our visit.

**BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER** (*Picoides arcticus*) – The Willow Burn of 2015 (which was started by fireworks, apparently), while disastrous for the human residents, has proven to be a banquet for woodpeckers, and is now perhaps the most reliable accessible place to see Black-backed Woodpecker in the state.

**DOWNY WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates pubescens*) – Only encountered in the woodpecker paradise of the Willow Burn.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates villosus*) – Likewise, at the Willow Burn.

**NORTHERN FLICKER** (*Colaptes auratus*) – Heard only at the Willow burn.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – Denali Highway and Polychrome Pass.

**GYRFALCON** (*Falco rusticolus*) – Polychrome Pass!

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – Soaring over the road as we finished up our day of birding along the Denali Highway.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE** (*Contopus sordidulus*) – Good views in Willow.

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (*Sayornis saya*) – At least one individual actively hunting aerial insects at Polychrome Pass. This species' distribution in Alaska only covers the interior of the state, and Denali NP is about the closest to the coast you can find it.

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**CANADA JAY** (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – A good year, as we ran into these several times, including along both the Denali and Parks Highways, and we saw fledged young twice.

**BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE** (*Pica hudsonia*) – Widespread in peopled areas on the mainland.

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*) – Very widespread and fairly common on the mainland. The go-to *Corvus* species in the region.

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – In Anchorage and on our way north.

**VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Several locations, including Anchorage.

**BANK SWALLOW** (*Riparia riparia*) – We had a flock of eight of these (a high number for the Pribis) coursing around over Tonki Point on St. Paul.

**CLIFF SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Several places along our Denali section, but we didn't pay too close attention to them given our very good experience with the colony at the hangar at the Bethel airport, which housed around one hundred active nests!

*Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)*

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Parus atricapillus*) – A few places along our drives to and from Denali and around Denali.



**BOREAL CHICKADEE** (*Poecile hudsonicus*) – A couple of nice experiences in appropriate boreal forest habitat on our way north to Denali and then again when we were heading back down to Anchorage.

Troglodytidae (Wrens).

**PACIFIC WREN (ALASCENSIS GROUP)** (*Troglodytes pacificus alascensis*) – We saw this endemic Pribilof taxon on our final day on St. Paul Island. This longer-billed, larger, version of Pacific Wren may warrant species status, at which point it would likely be re-named "Pribilof Wren". They are really quite incredible, as these tiny brown jobs spend the entire winter on these rocky windswept islets, subsisting on what they can find along the cliffs and coast. They are resident and non-migratory, though there is some circumstantial evidence that they disperse between islands occasionally.

Cinclidae (Dippers).

**AMERICAN DIPPER** (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – Judy had one of these while folks were dispersed and waiting for the owl to be rung at Brushkana.

Regulidae (Kinglets).

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*) – A widespread songster on our Denali leg.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

**VARIED THRUSH** (*Ixoreus naevius*) – Brief views along the Denali and Parks Highways, but mostly just heard.

**GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH** (*Catharus minimus*) – Seen singing in several locations on the Denali leg.

**SWAINSON'S THRUSH** (*Catharus ustulatus*) – Also widespread on the Denali leg, and in overlapping habitat with Gray-cheeked Thrush.

**HERMIT THRUSH** (*Catharus guttatus*) – Their beautiful songs cascaded down upon us from the woods upslope from our accomodation at Denali in the mornings and evenings. [\*]

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*) – Truly abundant on the mainland section of the itinerary.

**EYEBROWED THRUSH** (*Turdus obscurus*) – We went to see this vagrant after dinner on our full day on St. Paul. This is an East Asian counterpart to our American Robin, and is a rare spring vagrant on St. Paul, where it shows up more commonly (still rare, though perhaps annual) in the fall.

Sturnidae (Starlings).

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – As we drove through Anchorage on a couple of days. This introduced species used to be much less common around the city, but it now seems to have a very firm foothold.

Bombycillidae (Waxwings).

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING** (*Bombycilla garrulus*) – We finally connected with this stately waxwing on the way back from Denali.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

**GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (PRIBILOF IS.)** (*Leucosticte tephrocotis umbrina*) – The umbrina subspecies endemic to the Pribilof Islands. There is a reasonable chance that this, distinctly larger taxon will one day be a different species from the mainland Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches (perhaps forming a species along with the similarly large Aleutian subspecies).

**COMMON REDPOLL** (*Acanthis flammea*) – One on the Pribilofs and fairly widespread in the interior.

**WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL** (*Loxia leucoptera*) – Squirrely in the immediate Denali area (several flyovers or brief sightings), but then we had some good and cooperative ones on the way back along the Park Highway.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings).

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR** (*Calcarius lapponicus*) – Abundant on the Pribilofs.

**SNOW BUNTING** (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) – Breeding on the Pribilofs.

Passerellidae (New World Sparrows).

**AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** (*Spizelloides arborea*) – Denali Highway and Polychrome Pass.

**FOX SPARROW (RED)** (*Passerella iliaca zaboria*) – Several locations around Denali, especially along the Denali Highway.

**DARK-EYED JUNCO** (*Junco hyemalis*) – Widespread on the mainland.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – Common on the mainland.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – In the more barren tundra areas in the Denali region.

**SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*) – A big surprise was an individual singing at the Trident fish processing plant on St. Paul. Then the next day it turned into TWO individuals hanging out with each other there, with only one seen singing. This is a rare vagrant on St. Paul, with records only from the fall, and it seems like these birds did indeed arrive last autumn, and then successfully overwintered. This was one of the large subspecies, and our suspicions were that it was of the Aleutian race, though Song Sparrow taxonomy in Alaska is somewhat vexed due to some overlap and introgression (much like the situation with Fox Sparrow in Alaska).

**LINCOLN'S SPARROW** (*Melospiza lincolni*) – A cooperative couple of birds around Willow.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies).

**RUSTY BLACKBIRD** (*Euphagus carolinus*) – One bird flew by us calling at Westchester Lagoon, and then briefly perched in a tree by the mouth of the lagoon, allowing scope views for some.

Parulidae (New World Warblers).

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Good views in multiple places around the Parks and Denali Highways.

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Abundant on the Denali unit of the tour.

**YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*) – Widespread, though perhaps fewer than usual. Common on our day along the Denali Highway, at least.

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER** (*Setophaga striata*) – Fairly common on the Denali leg, and we got to watch them trilling away on the tippy top of spruce trees on several occasions.

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE)** (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – Abundant on the Denali leg.

**WILSON'S WARBLER** (*Cardellina pusilla*) – Abundant on the Denali leg.

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## MAMMALS

**SNOWSHOE HARE** (*Lepus americanus*) – Along the Parks Highway and in the Denali area. A seemingly very successful year for the species in South-Central Alaska, given their good showing for us.

**ARCTIC GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus parryi*) – The most common rodent on our Denali NP bus ride day. In the tundra and on the road edges through much of the route.

**RED SQUIRREL** (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – Widespread along the Parks Highway and in the Denali area.

**TUNDRA RED-BACKED VOLE** (*Clethrionomys rutilus*) – John and Joe had one of these on our final day.

**MUSKRAT** (*Ondatra zibethica*) – Westchester Lagoon.

**GRAY WHALE** (*Eschrichtius robustus*) – A nice surprise off the southern side of the island was a Gray Whale swimming slowly by shore, surfacing and blowing frequently. We had the opportunity to see this massive whale very well through both binoculars and a scope, a privilege not often afforded by the species in this part of the world, where they are often much farther off shore.

**ARCTIC FOX** (*Alopex lagopus*) – St. Paul Island provided very good studies of its native "blue morph" versions this year.

**BROWN (INCL. GRIZZLY) BEAR** (*Ursus arctos*) – An excellent encounter with a female and two large youngsters right alongside the road, and then crossing the road and walking upslope adjacent to the bus on our Denali day. Though we had a couple of other sightings along the way, this was clearly the highlight bear encounter for us.

**STELLER'S SEA LION** (*Eumetopias jubatus*) – This big blondie was off shore at St. Paul.

**NORTHERN FUR SEAL** (*Callorhinus ursinus*) – Fur seals aplenty at St. Paul, despite the recent steep population decline on the Pribilofs.

**HARBOR SEAL** (*Phoca vitulina*) – St. Paul.

**MOOSE** (*Alces alces*) – Several good sightings in the greater Denali area.

**CARIBOU** (*Rangifer tarandus granti*) – Distant scope views of a couple on a hillside along the Denali Highway contrasted with the excellent views in the park itself the very next day.

**REINDEER** (*Rangifer tarandus sibiricus*) – The St. Paul herd is often roaming around parts of the island that are not particularly accessible, but we lucked out and had them on a hillside visible from the road inland from Ridge Wall. [1]

**DALL'S SHEEP** (*Ovis dalli*) – Denali NP produced several excellent views of these delightful bovids for us.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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**Totals for the tour: 125 bird taxa and 15 mammal taxa**