



Field Guides Tour Report

Alaska II - Part One (Pribilofs & Denali) 2019

Jun 6, 2019 to Jun 14, 2019
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For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, [please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.](#)



Denali National Park is a must-see destination. Even if it weren't for the birds and mammals, the scenery alone was breathtaking. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

Alaska. Just that word alone brings to mind sky-scraping mountains, rocky shorelines, endless spruce forests, and expansive tundra. The state is so huge, in fact, that our tours divide it up into two parts. This part, Part I, visited some of the most remote islands in the state, the famed Pribilof Islands, and ventured north to the breathtaking Denali region.

We kicked things off in Anchorage where, even across the street from our hotel, we found ourselves ticking off species like Canvasback, Barrow's Goldeneye, Common Loon, and our first Bald Eagles. But our flight out to St. Paul Island was when the landscape really started to change for us. We dropped out of the clouds to find ourselves on a volcanic island several hundred miles from mainland Alaska. We donned our coats and hit the ground running, seeing several rare birds that first afternoon. Goodies like Black-headed Gull and even an Eyebrowed Thrush were waiting for us!

Our time on St. Paul Island was spent witnessing several eye-opening spectacles. From the cliff faces hosting hundreds of nesting seabirds, to the rugged beaches and quaint little town, St. Paul really is one of the most unique spots in the state. Cliffs like Ridge Wall and Reef Point put us face-to-face with Tufted Puffins, Horned Puffins, Parakeet Auklets, a variety of murre, and even the striking Crested Auklets. King Eiders and Ancient Murrelets were seen offshore, marshes hid rare Wood Sandpipers, and even a couple of displaying Red-necked Stints were found at Antone Slough! St. Paul Island is lucky to have several nice ponds and they hosted bathing Red-legged Kittiwakes, Cackling Geese, a Snow Goose, and even a mini-flock of Eurasian Wigeon. The beaches were home to the bellowing Northern Fur Seals, the cliffside vegetation hid Pacific Wrens, and the skies over the island provided some of the most exciting moments of the tour... a crippling view of the mega-rare White-tailed Eagle in the last hour or two we had on the island! What a send-off!

Back on mainland, we shifted gears, readjusted to having trees around, and visited Potter Marsh where we lucked into the continuing Falcated Duck, a very rare vagrant from Asia! As we drove north towards Denali, we stopped at the Sockeye Burn which delivered Western Wood-Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and even a nest of American Three-toed Woodpeckers! Farther north, even the highway yielded some awesome sightings like a Northern Goshawk overhead and a Spruce Grouse that somehow found us.

We spent a couple of days in the Denali region which was filled with a wealth of birds, some incredible mega-fauna, and scenery that was hard to beat. The Denali Highway took us into the land of Willow Ptarmigan, White-winged Crossbills, and lakes that hosted Red-throated Loons, Surf Scoters, and White-winged Scoters. Gray-cheeked Thrushes sang along the roadsides, Wilson's Warblers teed-up in trees, and yellowlegs perched on the tops of spruces! The following day we took the bus into the famed Denali National Park where we connected with a couple of the classic mammals of Alaska: Grizzly Bear, Caribou, Dall's Sheep, and Moose. Meanwhile, Golden Eagles kept us company, circling overhead.

As we drove back towards Anchorage, we birded near Denali State Park which continued to provide new and fascinating sightings. A singing Alder Flycatcher showed well, a Northern Waterthrush perched in a spruce, a Varied Thrush skipped through the shadows, and a stunning Black-backed Woodpecker perched at eye-level. Back in Anchorage, we connected with American Dipper, Harlequin Ducks, and even a kingfisher at Elmendorf Fish Hatchery. Westchester Lagoon was also very birdy and we added Hudsonian Godwit, some sharp Bonaparte's Gulls, and even the tiny Red-breasted Nuthatch.

It was a whirlwind of mountains, tundra, oceans, cliff-faces, puffins, fur seals, auklets, moose, and bears! But after a few days, Part I sadly concluded. However, on behalf of Field Guides, we sincerely hope you made memories that you'll remember forever. Tom and I had a blast and we hoped you did too! A huge shout-out to Karen in Austin who helped this tour run smoothly. Thanks so much for making this a fun trip and maybe we'll see you again on another tour.

Good birding!

- Cory

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

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

SNOW GOOSE (*Anser caerulescens*) – A fairly rare bird on St. Paul Island, this white goose was seen a couple of times near Antone Lake.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*) – In the most random of fashion, one of these flew over the campground at Byers Lake in Denali State Park!

ACKLING GOOSE (ALEUTIAN) (*Branta hutchinsii leucopareia*) – It was a treat getting to study two of these that were hanging out together near Antone Slough on St. Paul Island. Although this subspecies breeds in the Aleutian Islands, it's not uncommon for them to overshoot and find themselves in the Pribilofs.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Although experts lack complete certainty about what's going on with the weird geese around Anchorage, what is certain is that we saw these small guys both at Potter Marsh and Westchester Lagoon.

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*) – It was a better than average tour for these huge, all-white swans. We saw them at Potter Marsh, Westchester Lagoon, and again along the Denali Highway.

TUNDRA SWAN (WHISTLING) (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) – We were exploring at Marunich along the north shore of St. Paul Island when one of these flew down the shoreline!

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – A couple of the wetlands near Denali hosted this big-billed dabbling species. Later in the tour, we saw one at Westchester Lagoon as well.

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*) – This dabbling duck was fairly common on our visits to Potter Marsh and Westchester Lagoon.

FALCATED DUCK (*Mareca falcata*) – Wow, this long-staying mega rarity from the Far East was the star of the show in Anchorage! People had come from far-and-wide in hopes of seeing this vagrant at Potter Marsh and, as luck would have it, we encountered this snazzy male between our St. Paul Island trip and the following Denali leg.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Mareca penelope*) – Up to four of these dabbling ducks were seen on Antone Lake on St. Paul Island. Although they'd be considered very rare just about anywhere in the US, this species is actually expected that far west in Alaska.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Mareca americana*) – We encountered this handsome species several times on St. Paul Island, Potter Marsh in Anchorage, and Westchester Lagoon.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Our best looks at this classic duck came right from Anchorage where we saw them at Potter Marsh and Westchester Lagoon.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – This sleek and thin dabbler was common on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (EURASIAN) (*Anas crecca nimia*) – Studying the teal on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs was interesting; we saw both subspecies (which some sources treat as separate species) but *A. c. nimia* looked to be more numerous on our visit than the American *A. c. carolinensis*. Probably the most common variety, however, were intergrades between the two!

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Of all the teal we studied on St. Paul Island, the "American" subspecies was the least common. However, we did eventually see a pretty clean-looking one.

CANVASBACK (*Aythya valisineria*) – Although typically a pretty rare bird around Anchorage, at least three were seen on our tour. Our first sighting came from Lake Spenard near the hotel where a distant duo was scoped swimming. We later found another near Wasilla.

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*) – One of these handsome ducks was with a Canvasback on a lake near Wasilla on our final day.

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – This round-headed *Aythya* was fairly common on tour and we had sightings from Lake Spenard, St. Paul Island, and Westchester Lagoon. The comparisons with the following species at the latter location were especially insightful.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – Although not as common as the previous species, this smaller *Aythya* was studied nicely at Westchester Lagoon where it was seen side-by-side with the previous species.

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*) – It's hard to find a fancier, more sought-after duck on the planet! Our timing on St. Paul Island hit the jackpot when we found a few of these, including some males, offshore near Trident.

HARLEQUIN DUCK (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) – This is another fancy duck we spent time with on St. Paul Island where they were common along the rocky shoreline. We found more later in the tour at the Elmendorf Fish Hatchery, this time on a wooded stream.

SURF SCOTER (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – It's possible that this species was breeding on the lake we found it on along the Denali Highway east of Cantwell. It's cool to see them in their breeding habitat given most of us are used to seeing them offshore.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (NORTH AMERICAN) (*Melanitta deglandi deglandi*) – This is another chunky seaduck that actually breeds on lakes. We saw a few including one offshore St. Paul Island and then another couple on a lake along the Denali Highway.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*) – A fascinating and common breeding species on St. Paul Island.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – We saw these tiny diving ducks several times on St. Paul Island which was somewhat interesting; usually they're gone by that time of the year.

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – An attractive diving species, this duck was spotted at Lake Spenard in Anchorage and again along the Denali Highway.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala islandica*) – It was fun getting to study the subtle fieldmarks of the female on Lake Spenard on our first morning.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – Typically not a super common bird on this itinerary, these clean-cut divers were seen at the Elmendorf Fish Hatchery on our final day.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – A female-type bird was seen swimming offshore of St. Paul Island near Gorbach Bay.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

SPRUCE GROUSE (*Falciapennis canadensis*) – Sometimes you just get lucky! We were trucking our way north towards Denali when one of these was spotted from the highway! We pulled over and, after a little searching, managed to find the bird again and get fantastic looks. Wow!

WILLOW PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus lagopus*) – With white-tipped mountains surrounding us and a forest of willows, it was fitting for this fantastic species to pop out from the side of the Denali Highway. We couldn't have asked for a better show as the pair seemed very interested in us (well, Tom mostly).

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

RED-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps grisegena*) – A common breeding species around Anchorage. At Westchester Lagoon, we got to see nesting birds with a few chicks around as well. [N]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Not abundant, but they were spotted in Anchorage a few times. [I]

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – There were a couple that were seen flying on St. Paul Island but I think we all saw the ones distantly out on the flats near Westchester Lagoon.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – We had a short layover in Bethel on our way to St. Paul Island and we spotted two golden-plovers out the window of the plane as we were taxiing! Those were probably this species.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – A common shorebird at St. Paul Island. Most days there we tallied at least 10. [N]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

HUDSONIAN GODWIT (*Limosa haemastica*) – We stopped by Westchester Lagoon on the last day of the tour and spotted this handsome shorebird out on the tidal flats.

RED-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*) – Usually it's a major treat if we even get to glimpse this rare shorebird. However, for us, we had a stunning encounter with a couple of these at Antone Slough on St. Paul Island; we got to watch them calling, doing display flights, acts of aggression, you name it. Fantastic!

ROCK SANDPIPER (PTILOCNEMIS) (*Calidris ptilocnemis ptilocnemis*) – This relatively big and pale shorebird was the most common one during our time on St. Paul Island. Did we even go 10 minutes without seeing them? Although not quite endemic to the Pribilofs (they breed on St. Matthew Island), this subspecies is indeed endemic to a few Bering Sea islands. [N]

WILSON'S SNIBE (*Gallinago delicata*) – Although mostly heard-only, a few were detected during our time around marshes and wetlands near Denali.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – This spunky little shorebird was abundant at St. Paul Island where we watched them swimming through many of the ponds.

RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – Only a few folks had a quick glimpse of one as it flew out of the Tonki Point Wetlands on St. Paul Island.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – One of these tail-bobbing shorebirds was found on the last day of the tour.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – We had a nice showing by this big *Tringa* at a roadside pond along the Denali Highway. It was good to be able to compare this with the following species which was also present.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – A bit more dainty and straight-billed compared to the previous species, this shorebird was also spotted along the Denali Highway. It was the first time many of us got to see a yellowlegs perched in a tree!

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*) – Woah! This is a small, vagrant *Tringa* that we successfully saw a few times on St. Paul Island! First, we flushed one out of the grass near Tonki Point Wetlands and then, on our last day, a small group of these flew over while we were enjoying the eagles!

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

LONG-TAILED JAEGER (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – It's hard to go wrong with this graceful, dagger-tailed jaeger! We had a quick glimpse of one on our first day on St. Paul Island.

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*) – This seabird, along with the following species, lined cliffs on St. Paul Island where they breed. Compared to the Thick-billed, this species isn't as dark black and it lacks the pale line down the bill. [N]

THICK-BILLED MURRE (*Uria lomvia*) – This was the most common species of murre nesting on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs. We got outstanding looks from Ridge Wall and Reef Point where we could study them at length. [N]

PIGEON GUILLEMOT (*Cepphus columba*) – We tallied one of these black-and-white alcids swimming offshore from St. Paul Island.

ANCIENT MURRELET (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) – A pretty hard bird to find on St. Paul Island when you want to. We prevailed and spotted a couple in Gorbach Bay as we enjoyed the seal blind at Reef Point.

PARAKEET AUKLET (*Aethia psittacula*) – One of the three auklets that put on amazing shows for us at St. Paul Island. We got crippling looks at Ridge Wall and Reef Point and were able to appreciate the white belly and lack of any tufts.

LEAST AUKLET (*Aethia pusilla*) – This tiny alcid, the smallest in the world, is found only in the Bering Sea region! We watched them scrambling around on the cliff faces at St. Paul Island.

CRESTED AUKLET (*Aethia cristatella*) – This all dark alcid, one of the favorites for many of us, has that incredible crest that makes it so distinctive. We had a better than average experience at St. Paul Island when we were able to see them actually perched on the cliff faces and, sometimes, right below us!

RHINOCEROS AUKLET (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – Although auklet by name, this alcid is actually more closely related to puffins than to the other auklets! We scoped one of these offshore from St. Paul Island which was a good sighting for that location.

HORNED PUFFIN (*Fratercula corniculata*) – This beautiful seabird posed nicely for us repeatedly on St. Paul Island where they breed. Our best looks came from Ridge Wall and Reef Point.

TUFTED PUFFIN (*Fratercula cirrhata*) – Common on St. Paul Island, they looked rather regal sitting high up, alone, overlooking the Bering Sea! Reef Point had one particular bird that seemed to want to pose in all of our photos. What a beautiful and classic seabird of this part of the world.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) – A classic gull of the northern oceans, these spend most of the year out to sea. However, to breed, they swarm cliff faces where they build bulky nests and, it seems, are vocal about it nonstop. These were abundant on St. Paul Island. [N]

RED-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa brevirostris*) – One of the most range-restricted gulls on the planet, this was one of the specialties we saw very nicely on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs. They have a smaller bill, darker gray upperparts, and a bit of a more-rounded head. [N]

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Seen on Lake Spenard in Anchorage and then again on the flats offshore from Westchester Lagoon. Some of them even had that nice black hood indicative of breeding adult plumage.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – One of the rarer treats we got to see on St. Paul Island was this vagrant awaiting our arrival. This Old World species was mixed in with a gull flock on Salt Lagoon on our first evening.

MEW GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*) – This is a white-headed, three-year gull species that was probably our most common gull of the trip. We saw this around Anchorage and every day around Denali. [N]

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – Once we went well inland towards Denali, we started seeing this larger, four-year gull.

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL (*Larus glaucescens*) – These guys truly are giants! We saw this big species every day on St. Paul Island where they are usually pretty pure (unlike the hybrids elsewhere).

GLAUCOUS GULL (*Larus hyperboreus*) – We had only one of these large, all-white northern gulls on St. Paul Island.

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Although these classic northern terns were quite common at Potter Marsh and Westchester Lagoon, we even found one at St. Paul Island where it's a pretty rare bird. [N]

Gaviidae (Loons)

RED-THROATED LOON (*Gavia stellata*) – This slender species of loon was scoped on a lake along the Denali Highway. However, we only had them at the one spot

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – One of these was seen on Lake Spenard on our first day of tour. Turns out, that was the first and the last we enjoyed on Part I.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

NORTHERN FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialis*) – A beautiful tubenose, these were nesting on the cliffs at Ridge Wall on St. Paul Island. It was a real treat to see them gliding by as we stood overlooking the Bering Sea. [N]

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

RED-FACED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax urile*) – Almost endemic to the Bering Sea, this specialty cormorant is one of the many reasons visiting St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs is so vital!

PELAGIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – Although greatly outnumbered by the previous species at St. Paul Island, this slender-billed cormorant was seen from shore a couple of times.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Woah, this was unexpected! Although this is a familiar and common cormorant for many of us, this is the rarest of the possible cormorants at St. Paul Island! We were at Marunich along the north shore of the island when one of these flew right by us.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – This fish-eating raptor was seen on our fourth day as we drove north towards Denali.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – The more common of the two eagles in Denali National Park, this species eats mostly mammals and does not rely on fish. While in the park, we saw a couple of these including a youngster and at least one nice adult.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus hudsonius*) – A couple of these white-rumped, wetland-loving raptors were seen lazily swooping over open areas near Denali.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK (*Accipiter gentilis*) – It was completely random but that's how it goes sometimes! One of these was soaring over the highway as we drove north towards Denali. Excellent sighting!

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – This regal-looking raptor wasn't uncommon during our time on the mainland. Even on St. Paul Island, we encountered one of these although that one looked pretty ratty.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) – This exceptionally rare vagrant was seen on St. Paul Island just in the nick of time! We had spent quite a bit of time hoping for this huge bird of prey but we came up empty at every turn. We had pretty much given up on seeing it, after all, our plane was en route. However, a flight delay meant we had a few more hours on the island. Then, over the radio, the call came out... the eagle was being seen just down the road! We couldn't believe our luck as we all enjoyed watching it soaring overhead with the Bald Eagle. Unbelievable!

RED-TAILED HAWK (HARLAN'S) (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) – A couple of these raptors were seen briefly as they soared overhead on our final day at the Elmendorf Fish Hatchery.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Like the previous species, this addition was seen on our final day at the Elmendorf Fish Hatchery.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (*Picoides dorsalis*) – What a treat it was to witness this fine species at a nest hole in the Sockeye Burn! We watched as the adults came in, ducked inside, and fed the chicks that were making a ruckus. [N]

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides arcticus*) – This is a pretty uncommon species but we found them a couple of different days including in the Sockeye Burn and then later near Denali State Park.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Dryobates pubescens*) – We encountered this small woodpecker just once, at Byers Lake in Denali State Park.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Dryobates villosus*) – At least one of these medium-sized woodpeckers was present in the Sockeye Burn alongside the Black-backed.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – This bird-eating falcon was spotted along the Denali Highway by some folks.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER (*Contopus cooperi*) – A chunky, long-winged flycatcher that we saw in the Sockeye Burn as we drove north towards Denali. Note that this is in the same genus as the pewees.

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus sordidulus*) – A rather local species in Alaska, this flycatcher was tracked down in the Sockeye Burn as we drove north.

ALDER FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax alnorum*) – Seen very nicely as it sang from a treetop at Byers Lake in Denali State Park.

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – We encountered this flycatcher briefly along the bus route through Denali National Park.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

CANADA JAY (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – Sometimes we didn't have to go far to see new trip birds. For example, some of these curious Corvids found us on the grounds at the Denali Bluffs Hotel. Note the recent change to revert from Gray Jay back to the original name of Canada Jay.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Although quite common on the mainland around Anchorage and beyond, this long-tailed Corvid is always a stunning bird.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Common during our time on the mainland.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – This blue-backed cavity-nester wasn't uncommon during our time around Potter Marsh, Sockeye Burn, and the Denali Highway.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Our best looks at this insect-eating species came from Potter Marsh where we were able to see the white coming up the sides of the rump as they swerved overhead.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – A few of these had found their way over hundreds of miles of open ocean in the Bering Sea to St. Paul Island. They seemed pretty content to swoop around Cup Pond between the airport and town!

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Wow, it was pretty awesome landing in Bethel and being greeted by dozens of these nesting on the airport buildings! [N]

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Parus atricapillus*) – A classic and common species on the mainland, these friendly little guys were spotted around the Anchorage hotel, Westchester Lagoon, Elmendorf Fish Hatchery, and up around Denali.

BOREAL CHICKADEE (*Parus hudsonicus*) – The wheezy calls of this northern chickadee were good clues to their presence at the Denali Bluffs Hotel and Byers Lake.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – One showed up randomly for us at Westchester Lagoon on our final day.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

PACIFIC WREN (ALASCENSIS GROUP) (*Troglodytes pacificus alascensis*) – The thought of a tiny, brown, mouse-like bird creeping along the cliffs of the Pribilof Islands, even during the winter, is rather fascinating. The subspecies we saw there, at Reef Point, is *T. p. alascensis* which is only found on three islands in the world: St. Paul Island, St. George Island, and Otter Island... all three in the Pribilofs. The alascensis group, however, contains another subspecies found in the Aleutians.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – Perched contently at the Elmendorf Fish Hatchery, this stream-loving specialty was one of the final new species for our Part I list.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – Heard a couple of times around Denali State Park. [*]

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)

ARCTIC WARBLER (*Phylloscopus borealis*) – We were birding in Denali National Park when we heard the distant buzzing trill of this species. However, it remained out of view. [*]

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

VARIED THRUSH (*Ixoreus naevius*) – One of these handsome thrushes was spotted at Byers Lake in Denali State Park.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*) – A couple of these were singing along the Denali Highway and we managed to get the scope on a couple. The song is a beautiful and complex sound of the north.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH (*Catharus ustulatus*) – A couple of these buffy-faced thrushes were singing in the Sockeye Burn as we made our way north. Around Denali, we heard a couple more singing in the morning.

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*) – Although it was heard on many occasions, this species stayed out of view for us. The sound though was a beautiful song to wake up to at the Denali Bluffs Hotel. [*]

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Very common during our time on the mainland.

EYEBROWED THRUSH (*Turdus obscurus*) – This sneaky thrush is a vagrant from the Far East. And yet, one found its way to St. Paul Island where it spent its time hiding in the cut at Polovina Hill. Lucky for us, it hung around a few days and our entire group was able to enjoy it.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – A few were seen around Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage. [I]

Eringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (PRIBILOF IS.) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis umbrina*) – This attractive species seems to take a different role on St. Paul Island; not only were they present, they were everywhere, nesting in holes, sitting on cars, you name it! We even got to watch some interesting behavior in the quarry where it looked like one was presenting food while half-spreading its wings. While this huge subspecies, *L. t. umbrina*, is found mostly in the Pribilofs, it's not actually endemic to there. [N]

COMMON REDPOLL (*Acanthis flammea*) – This small finch was seen on a handful of days including at St. Paul Island, Denali State Park, and Denali Bluffs Hotel.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL (*Loxia leucoptera*) – There were a couple of roving flocks that we tried to track down around the Denali Highway. They were often pretty flighty though.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – Just a couple of these small finches were heard on Part I; one around Lake Spenard and again at Byers Lake. [*]

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

LAPLAND LONGSPUR (*Calcarius lapponicus*) – Common on St. Paul Island. It's always a treat to see them in their bright breeding plumage!

SNOW BUNTING (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) – This is another stunning species that was a fairly common breeder on St. Paul Island. Unlike the previous species, this black-and-white songbird prefers to nest in more rocky habitats there.

Passerellidae (New World Sparrows)

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW (*Spizelloides arborea*) – This northern sparrow actually has a very nice song. We got to enjoy it in the Denali area where we tallied a couple.

FOX SPARROW (RED) (*Passerella iliaca zaboria*) – This chunky sparrow also has a nice song. We found a couple along the Denali Highway and in Denali State Park. The subspecies, *P. i. zaboria*, is in the "Red" group.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (*Junco hyemalis*) – Fairly common for us around Anchorage, the Sockeye Burn, and around Denali.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – This attractive sparrow was also fairly common during our time around Denali and Anchorage.

GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) – Although it remained out of view for us on Part I, this western sparrow was heard a couple of times as we birded in Denali National Park. [*]

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – A few of these small sparrows were tallied around Anchorage, including one heard singing from Lake Spenard, and also up around Denali.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – It was fun getting to spend time with this species all the way out on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs. It's hard to imagine a songbird like a Song Sparrow making the 100-200 mile flight over the Bering Sea but they somehow managed to.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RUSTY BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus carolinus*) – One of these flew over Lake Spenard on our first morning.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Although loud and easy to hear, this warbler can be very sneaky. For us, we eventually got views at Byers Lake in Denali State Park.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Quite common in a variety of habitats on Part I, this somewhat drably-marked species was heard quite a bit though.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Not a common species on Part I, this warbler was just heard a couple of times and glimpsed once.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – A denizen of the northern spruce forests, this attractive warbler was fairly common for us around Denali National Park, along the Denali Highway, Byers Lake, and the Sockeye Burn. The song is very high-pitched!

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE) (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – A common species during our time on the mainland.

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*) – The Denali area is an excellent spot to see and hear this common warbler. All yellow with that distinctive black cap, this species isn't bad-looking either. Most of our stops along the Denali Highway yielded at least one of these.

MAMMALS

SNOWSHOE HARE (*Lepus americanus*) – Seen daily during our time up around Denali.

HOARY MARMOT (*Marmota caligata*) – A few folks got a glimpse of one of these from the bus in Denali National Park. It didn't stay in view long though before scampering away.

ARCTIC GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus parryii*) – We grew accustomed to seeing these in Denali National Park where they were very friendly visitors interested in our lunches.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – Fairly common during our time in the north, especially around Denali.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – Potter Marsh near Anchorage yielded one of these swimming not too far off from shore.

NORTH AMERICAN PORCUPINE (*Erethizon dorsatum*) – A few folks glimpsed one of these prickly dudes near Denali National Park.

GRAY WHALE (*Eschrichtius robustus*) – Although not usually seen on this part, one of these was spotted offshore from Reef Point on St. Paul Island during our stay.

RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*) – One of these, a "Cross Fox" more specifically, was seen in Denali National Park from the bus.

ARCTIC FOX (*Alopex lagopus*) – A common companion during our time on St. Paul Island. The foxes there stay dark through the winter which is unique compared to the mainland ones that turn white.

BROWN (INCL. GRIZZLY) BEAR (*Ursus arctos*) – Success! We encountered a few of these "Toklat" Brown Bears from the bus in Denali National Park! They seemed pretty content to slowly wander away from us. It was such a scenic landscape to see this huge and classic predator.

STELLER'S SEA LION (*Eumetopias jubatus*) – We glimpsed a few of these huge guys offshore from St. Paul Island. The males can weigh nearly 2500 lbs!

NORTHERN FUR SEAL (*Callorhinus ursinus*) – So much of the history of the Pribilof Islands, and even the state of Alaska, is due to this once-abundant mammal. Although still seemingly numerous, and we saw a lot of them along the beaches, their numbers have drastically declined and current trends put them in trouble.

HARBOR SEAL (*Phoca vitulina*) – Spotted from St. Paul Island, these are often seen periscoping; sticking just their heads straight up out of the water.

MOOSE (*Alces alces*) – This gangly northern giant was spotted quite a few times around Denali including some chomping down right along the road. It's always fun seeing these!

CARIBOU (*Rangifer tarandus granti*) – We enjoyed nice looks at a herd of these in Denali National Park where the stellar landscape provided quite the backdrop.

REINDEER (*Rangifer tarandus sibiricus*) – These were introduced to St. Paul Island from Russia as a substitute for hunting the Northern Fur Seals. The herd persists and we got distant looks a couple of times near Lake Hill and distantly to the west. [1]

DALL'S SHEEP (*Ovis dalli*) – We keenly spotted these cliff-loving sheep from the bus through Denali National Park.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 130 bird taxa and 17 mammal taxa