



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Alaska II - Part Two (Nome, Seward & Barrow) 2015**

Jun 12, 2015 to Jun 22, 2015  
Megan Edwards Crewe & Pepe Rojas

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



*The lovely Pacific Loon was seen throughout the tour. This one was just offshore in Barrow. Photo by participant Linda Rudolph.*

The second part of our Alaska tour was characterized by great weather, which is always appreciated because it really enhances the whole experience. After saying goodbye to some of our participants from Part One, we headed off for another adventure, which started in Nome, continued to Seward, and finished at Barrow, north of the Arctic Circle.

Among the highlights from Nome, Bluethroat was surely top of the list, but we had great sightings of other specialties as well, including Northern Wheatear, Arctic Warbler, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Gyrfalcons with three chicks at their nest, Aleutian Terns along the Council road, a Slaty-backed Gull, three species of jaegers, Willow and Rock ptarmigans -- and, of course, the always breathtaking Kougark road, where we also had Muskox and a Grizzly.

After such an auspicious start, we continued on to Seward, and I don't think we could have asked for a better experience. We began with a visit to some feeders near town, where we enjoyed great views of Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Siskin, and Rufous Hummingbird, and had wonderful studies of Downy and Hairy woodpeckers side by side. The weather we had during our boat trip the next day was just amazing; sunny weather and calm waters were the perfect combination to allow us to really relax and enjoy our day on the water.

Seeing all of the alcids we did was really remarkable -- not only our target Kittlitz's and Ancient murrelets but also Horned and Tufted puffins, Rhinoceros and Parakeet auklets, Marbled Murrelet and three species of cormorant -- including Red-faced, which can be a tough bird to find in the Kenai Fjords. As if this were not enough, we were lucky not just to see Orcas and Humpback Whales but to witness some great examples of their behavior, including pirouettes and full-body breaches (Orcas) and fin-slapping and bubble-net fishing (Humpbacks). Wow, what an unforgettable experience!

Finally, we continued on to Barrow, where we had amazing views of Common, King, Steller's, and Spectacled eiders and Snowy Owls, as well as a nice variety of shorebirds in their breeding finery.

Something else that made this trip really memorable and special for Megan and me was the fact we had such a fine group of participants, who bonded together and had such a great time; we really hope to see you again somewhere else in the world. In the meantime enjoy every moment of your life -- and bird a lot!

Love, peace, and joy -- Pepe (and Megan)

## 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)

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** (*Anser albifrons*) – We saw the first individuals of this species on the Council Road in Nome. Later in the tour, we had more views in Barrow.

**SNOW GOOSE** (*Chen caerulescens*) – As expected, we saw this species around Barrow.

**BRANT (BLACK)** (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) – We came across our first birds at the Council Road in Nome and others in Barrow.

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – We had this species in multiple locations, including a big flock swimming at Westchester Lagoon on our last afternoon in Anchorage.

**TRUMPETER SWAN** (*Cygnus buccinator*) – On our drive to Seward, we had great views of these birds.

**TUNDRA SWAN (WHISTLING)** (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) – And this species was seen around Nome and Barrow.

**GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*) – Seen in Nome and Barrow.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Anas americana*) – Seen at various locations throughout the tour.

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – This is also another of the waterfowl species seen at different locations during the tour.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – Ditto.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*)

**GREATER SCAUP** (*Aythya marila*) – The only location where we did not come across these ducks was Seward.

**LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*) – Its smaller cousin on the other hand is rarer at these latitudes, but we had excellent views around Westchester lagoon in Anchorage.

**STELLER'S EIDER** (*Polysticta stelleri*) – Barrow must be one of the best places in the world to see eiders, and we had great views of these ducks.

**SPECTACLED EIDER** (*Somateria fischeri*) – In Barrow, we had several encounters with these birds.

**KING EIDER** (*Somateria spectabilis*) – Ditto.

**COMMON EIDER (PACIFIC)** (*Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*) – Despite its name, this was the least common of the four eider species that occur in the area.

**HARLEQUIN DUCK** (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)

**BLACK SCOTER** (*Melanitta americana*)

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** (*Clangula hyemalis*)

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*) – The only looks we got of this species were of a female on a pond by the highway during our drive to Seward.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (*Mergus serrator*)

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

**WILLOW PTARMIGAN** (*Lagopus lagopus*) – During our trip to Nome, we came across some individuals, including a very close female on "The Curlew's" hill.

**ROCK PTARMIGAN** (*Lagopus muta*) – Our last day in Nome we drove along the Teller road looking for some species, and this one was on the list. At the quarry, under very bad light conditions, Neil's sharp eyes found a male that responded very well to Meegs' tape. Needless to say, we had excellent views of it.

### Gaviidae (Loons)

**RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*) – This species was quite abundant and common around Nome.

**PACIFIC LOON** (*Gavia pacifica*) – This was the most common loon of the trip.

**COMMON LOON** (*Gavia immer*) – Not as "common" as the previous species. We saw them twice only -- once at Seward and then in Barrow.

### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**RED-NECKED GREBE** (*Podiceps grisegena*) – Linda was the first to see one during the drive from Seward. The rest of us caught up with the species at Westchester lagoon.

### Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

**SOOTY SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus griseus*) – During our glorious boat trip in Seward, we saw at least two birds flying by. But at one point, we had an individual sitting in the water, which allowed us to enjoy great looks.

### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Common on our boat trip.

**RED-FACED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax urile*) – This one was seen well too, which was a nice surprise considering how hard they've been to find in the last few years.

**PELAGIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – Common on the rocky shorelines (and flying by) around Seward.

### Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**GOLDEN EAGLE** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Surprisingly, we only saw this species once at Nome during our drive to the Coffee Dome.

**BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Quite common. Perhaps the most dramatic sighting was at Westchester lagoon, when we saw them carrying some Mew Gull chicks and being chased by the adults.

**RED-TAILED HAWK (HARLAN'S)** (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) – Another species of raptor that we saw only once during the drive to Seward.

**ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK** (*Buteo lagopus*) – Seen around Nome everyday.

Gruidae (Cranes)

**SANDHILL CRANE** (*Grus canadensis*)

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

**BLACK OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus bachmani*) – We enjoyed good looks of a couple of birds during our boat trip in Seward.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis dominica*) – Seen well at Nome and Barrow.

**PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis fulva*) – Seen only around Nome at different locations.

**SEMPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Seen well at Nome and Barrow.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**WANDERING TATTLER** (*Tringa incana*) – What a lovely bird. We enjoyed great looks of an individual foraging at a pond along the Teller road on our last morning in Nome.

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*)

**WHIMBREL (AMERICAN)** (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – We saw several individuals at Coffee Dome during our Bristle-thighed Curlew search.

**HUDSONIAN GODWIT** (*Limosa haemastica*) – On our last outing to Westchester lagoon, we had some individuals resting on the island near the parking lot.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa lapponica*) – Ditto.

**BLACK TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria melanocephala*) – Seen at Nome and Barrow.

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*) – We encountered this species every day in Barrow, including an adult with chicks.

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** (*Calidris bairdii*) – Another species we saw around Barrow.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** (*Calidris melanotos*) – One we had every day in Barrow.

**SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris pusilla*) – This one was one of the species Andrea wanted to see and I hope she was not disappointed, since we had them every day at Barrow.

**WESTERN SANDPIPER** (*Calidris mauri*) – Another every day bird in Barrow.

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – We had great studies of these birds at Westchester lagoon, where we had the chance also to compare them with nearby Hudsonian Godwits.

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – More abundant than the previous species, with many handsome pairs seen in Barrow.

**WILSON'S SNIBE** (*Gallinago delicata*) – Most of seen (and heard) in their roller-coaster display flights over the Kougarok road.

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – First seen at Nome. Later, in Barrow, it was an every day species.

**RED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – Every day in Barrow.

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

**POMARINE JAEGER** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) – Our first sightings were in Nome, with others in Barrow.

**PARASITIC JAEGER** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – Same here.

**LONG-TAILED JAEGER** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – And also with this. It was indeed a great trip for jaegers!

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

**COMMON MURRE** (*Uria aalge*) – We saw huge rafts of this species along the coastline in Nome. Later, during our Seward boat trip, we had more views of these birds.

**BLACK GUILLEMOT** (*Cepphus grylle*) – We only had one sighting of this species at Point Barrow.

**PIGEON GUILLEMOT** (*Cepphus columba*) – This species was recorded during the sea outing in Seward.

**MARbled MURRELET** (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – We saw these birds during our sea excursion at Seward. Our last day, we went to the southern part of town to get even better views of them.

**KITTLITZ'S MURRELET** (*Brachyramphus brevirostris*) – YES!!! We had good views of several at Northwestern glacier.

**ANCIENT MURRELET** (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) – On our way back from the glacier on our boat trip, we also had good views of this species. It was a great day for murrelets!

**PARAKEET AUKLET** (*Aethia psittacula*) – Seen well during our outing in Kenai Fjords National Park.

**RHINOCEROS AUKLET** (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – These birds look fantastic during the breeding season. It's amazing how different they look in their nonbreeding plumage, when they have no "horn" on their bill.

**HORNED PUFFIN** (*Fratercula corniculata*) – Great looks of many birds during our Seward boat trip.

**TUFTED PUFFIN** (*Fratercula cirrhata*) – Ditto.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** (*Rissa tridactyla*) – Especially common in Seward, with good numbers in Nome as well.

**BONAPARTE'S GULL** (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Seen only in Anchorage on our last day of the tour.

**MEW GULL** (*Larus canus*)

**HERRING GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – We came across one individual the day we drove from Anchorage to Seward.

**HERRING GULL (VEGA)** (*Larus argentatus vegae*) – At Nome, during our first outing, we had very good looks of an immature bird.

**SLATY-BACKED GULL** (*Larus schistisagus*) – We enjoyed great looks of an individual sitting at the beach in Nome.

**GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL** (*Larus glaucescens*) – A common gull around Seward.

**GLAUCOUS GULL** (*Larus hyperboreus*)

**ALEUTIAN TERN** (*Onychoprion aleuticus*) – This species was seen well several times at different locations in Nome.

**ARCTIC TERN** (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Another every day bird we enjoyed, including an individual nesting at the side of the Teller road in Nome. [N]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) [I]

*Strigidae (Owls)*

**SNOWY OWL** (*Bubo scandiacus*) – As expected, we recorded this lovely owl along Cake-Eater road in Barrow.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** (*Asio flammeus*) – We had some looks of this species around Nome.

*Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)*

**RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** (*Selasphorus rufus*) – First, at Eva's feeders, we had some looks at this species. Later, at Point Lowell, we enjoyed more great views.

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**DOWNY WOODPECKER** (*Picoides pubescens*) – This and the following species were seen very well at Ava's feeders.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER** (*Picoides villosus*)

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**GYRFALCON** (*Falco rusticolus*) – We had very good scope views of an adult and three chicks in a nest at Nome. [N]

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – Jim spotted an individual in Barrow.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**ALDER FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax alnorum*) [\*]

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**GRAY JAY** (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – We saw (and heard) them at Hillside park in Anchorage.

**STELLER'S JAY** (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – At Hillside Park, Jim saw one. Later, we heard them only around Seward during our outing to Lowell Point.

**BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE** (*Pica hudsonia*)

**NORTHWESTERN CROW** (*Corvus caurinus*) – Seen well every day around Seward.

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*)

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Seen well at different locations during the tour.

**VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Ditto.

**CLIFF SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Ditto.

*Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)*

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile atricapillus*) – We saw this bird twice: first at Hillside Park and later around Seward.

**CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile rufescens*)

**BOREAL CHICKADEE** (*Poecile hudsonicus*) – Also seen Hillside Park.

*Sittidae (Nuthatches)*

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta canadensis*) – One of the birds we enjoyed at the feeders near Seward.

*Troglodytidae (Wrens)*

**PACIFIC WREN (ALASKAN ISLANDS)** (*Troglodytes pacificus alascensis*) – WOW! What a surprise. It was really cool to see this bird on our morning around Lowell Point in Seward.

*Cinclidae (Dippers)*

**AMERICAN DIPPER** (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – We had excellent views of an individual resting on the weir at the salmon counting station near Seward. [N]

*Regulidae (Kinglets)*

**GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus satrapa*) – Seen in the pines at Lowell Point near Seward.

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*) – Seen first at Hillside Park and later around Seward.

*Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)*

**ARCTIC WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus borealis*) – Seen and heard very well around Nome.

*Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)*

**BLUETHROAT** (*Luscinia svecica*) – What a bird! We enjoyed great scope views along the Kougarok Road. A favorite of many.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) – Another bird we encountered in Nome.

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH** (*Catharus minimus*) – We saw this bird every day around Nome.

**HERMIT THRUSH** (*Catharus guttatus*) – Heard only around Nome, but seen later at Seward.

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*)

**VARIED THRUSH** (*Ixoreus naevius*)

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – It used to be a "good" bird for Alaska. Not anymore, as it has become increasingly common. [I]

*Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)*

**EASTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla tschutschensis*) – This bird was seen only by Tim.

*Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)*

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR** (*Calcarius lapponicus*)



**SNOW BUNTING** (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) – Quite abundant around Barrow.

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – We had one first around Nome and then a very responsive individual in Seward.

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis celata*)

**YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*)

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER** (*Setophaga striata*) – The first time I saw this bird was in the tropical rainforests of Peru! Every time I see them, I cannot help but think about the incredible migration route that takes them to South America.

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER** (*Setophaga coronata*) – The "Myrtle Warbler" was seeing well during the tour.

**TOWNSEND'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga townsendi*) – We had a very nice (and responsive) male at Granite Creek on our way to Seward.

**WILSON'S WARBLER** (*Cardellina pusilla*)

*Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)*

**AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** (*Spizella arborea*) – Seen around Nome.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – This one was also seen around Nome and Barrow.

**FOX SPARROW (SOOTY)** (*Passerella iliaca sinuosa*) – The "Sooty" form is expected at the coast and we did indeed see it around Seward.

**FOX SPARROW (RED)** (*Passerella iliaca zaboria*) – And this one, which is the reddish form found in the tiaga, was seen around Nome.

**SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*)

**LINCOLN'S SPARROW** (*Melospiza lincolnii*) – Seen once on the day we drove from Seward to Anchorage.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – Pretty common around Nome.

**GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) – What a lovely song these birds sing!

**DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED)** (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*)

*Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)*

**PINE GROSBEEK** (*Pinicola enucleator*) – Quite common around Ava's feeders, where we enjoyed great looks of both males and females.

**WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL** (*Loxia leucoptera*)

**COMMON REDPOLL** (*Acanthis flammea*) – Really common, seen almost every day.

**HOARY REDPOLL** (*Acanthis hornemanni*) – Not quite as common as the previous species.

**PINE SISKIN** (*Spinus pinus*) – Another bird seen well, thanks to Ava's feeders.

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## MAMMALS

**ARCTIC GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus parryi*)

**RED SQUIRREL** (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)

**TUNDRA RED-BACKED VOLE** (*Clethrionomys rutilus*)

**ORCA** (*Orcinus orca*) – One of my favorite moments of the tour was when we had a close encounter with a pod with some breaching action.

**DALL'S PORPOISE** (*Phocoenoides dalli*) – These marine mammals put on a great show for us.

**HUMPBACK WHALE** (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – Another wonderful moment of our boat trip was witnessing the bubble net fishing of a handful in Resurrection Bay.

**BROWN (INCL. GRIZZLY) BEAR** (*Ursus arctos*) – After we came back from our outing at Coffee Dome, we spotted one walking down the valley. It was nice to be at the vans and ready to go though!

**SEA OTTER** (*Enhydra lutris*) – Quite a cute mammal. We had great looks in Seward.

**STELLER'S SEA LION** (*Eumetopias jubatus*)

**HARBOR SEAL** (*Phoca vitulina*)

**SPOTTED SEAL** (*Phoca largha*)

**RINGED SEAL** (*Phoca hispida*)

**MOOSE** (*Alces alces*)

**CARIBOU** (*Rangifer tarandus granti*)

**MUSKOX** (*Ovibos moschatus*)

**DALL'S SHEEP** (*Ovis dalli*)

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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**Totals for the tour: 138 bird taxa and 16 mammal taxa**