



Field Guides Tour Report

Alaska II - Part Two (Nome, Seward & Barrow) 2016

Jun 9, 2016 to Jun 19, 2016

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



The snow-covered peak of Denali was visible when we flew from Anchorage to Barrow and back. Though we only visit Denali by land on Part 1 of the tour, it was exciting to see this iconic mountain so well from the air. Photo by guide Tom Johnson.

This tour was a whirlwind of adventure as we bounced back and forth between the coastal tundra of Nome and the Seward Peninsula, the humid spruce-and-glacier fjords of the Kenai Peninsula, and the frozen extreme north of Barrow. Birding was fast and furious, and in addition to an incredible diversity of expected breeding birds and mammals, we found a few real surprises along the way.

A direct flight from Anchorage took us far to the northwest to the edge of the Bering Sea in Nome, where we spent three days exploring the three main roads leading from town, each with its own birding highlights. Safety Sound and the Council Road brought us Aleutian Terns, Gyrfalcons, Eurasian Wigeons, a Red-necked Stint, and even two surprise Caspian Terns from the south (rarer than Red-necked Stint here!). Our sojourn along the Kougarok Road helped us find Bluethroat and Rock Ptarmigan, though we ended up only hearing a tantalizing Bristle-thighed Curlew on this trip. The Teller Road produced Northern Wheatears, plenty of Short-eared Owls, and some great looks at Grizzly Bears. One of the most remarkable species of the Nome visit was Eastern Phoebe. Right before we'd arrived, other birders had found an Eastern Phoebe near the Nome River. When we looked, we found a bird actively bringing material into an almost-completed nest in a culvert that ran under the road. It was completely bizarre to find this familiar eastern North American bird out here on the edge of the Bering Sea.

Heading south of Anchorage, we drove through the huge, moist conifer forest at the base of the Kenai Peninsula in order to position ourselves in Seward. This was our point of departure for an all-day boat trip that took us into Kenai Fjords National Park. This year, we chartered a boat just for the Field Guides group, so we got to choose where we went and how much time we spent in certain places -- ideal for bird-finding! Despite a windy forecast, we managed to sneak in along the edges of the fjords and found 10 species of alcids including some eleventh hour Kittlitz's Murrelets at the foot of one of the park's beautiful glaciers. Other highlights from the boat trip included Ancient Murrelets, Parakeet Auklets (at their southeastern-most breeding outpost), Black Oystercatchers, Steller's Sea Lions, Humpback Whales, Dall's Porpoises, and a Sea Otter eating a huge octopus. The sight of hundreds of Tufted Puffins buzzing all around the boat was truly memorable, too.

Leaving the Seward coast, we returned to Anchorage for a flight to the far north: Barrow was up next. Though we see fewer species overall at Barrow than other sites visited on our Alaska tours, this is one of the most fascinating parts of the trip. In addition to a few rare and range-restricted breeding species like the northern eiders, this area also holds the promise of far-flung vagrants trapped at the farthest north point in the USA. This trip was quick to produce, as we found Steller's and Spectacled Eiders, Red-necked Stint and a fantastic male Curlew Sandpiper on the first afternoon of our visit. We spent the next two days getting acquainted with all four of the eider species, and we also tracked down a few other gems such as flyby Yellow-billed Loons and a sleeping Polar Bear - distant, though we ended up with good scope views of this iconic northern predator. Conditions change each time we visit Barrow in spring; this year, the ice was still locked in at Barrow with a lead of open water visible perhaps a half mile offshore, and this kept some of the waterbirds out of reach as we were stuck on the beach. However, we bumped our way out across the gravel to the tip of Point Barrow, the northernmost piece of land in the United States, and found large flocks of eiders and a few Black Guillemots in the small patches of visible open water. Real spring would arrive in Barrow after our departure, but we had a wonderful time checking out the extreme climate of this peculiar northern town.

Alaska is spectacular at any time, but Dave and I had a particularly fun time traveling with this group, and we wanted to thank you for your enthusiasm, flexibility, and good company. We hope to see you out in the field again soon!

Good birding,

-- Tom

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)

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*) – We saw our first in Nome; more were in Barrow at the end of the tour.

SNOW GOOSE (*Chen caerulescens*) – Surprising numbers were flying over in flocks in Barrow, including rare-in-Barrow dark morph birds ("Blue Geese").

BRANT (BLACK) (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) – Scattered groups in Nome, and a few large flocks migrating past in Barrow.

ACKLING GOOSE (*Branta hutchinsii*) – Several sightings of presumed Taverner's Geese in the Nome area.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Seen several times in the Anchorage area between other stages of the tour. Some close birds were swimming at Potter Marsh.

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*) – Nice views at Potter Marsh on the way to Seward.

TUNDRA SWAN (WHISTLING) (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) – A regular sight in Nome and Barrow. Larger numbers were in Nome.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – We saw several small groups around Anchorage - at Westchester Lagoon and Potter Marsh.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*) – Three males were swimming with American Wigeon and other ducks along the edge of Safety Sound near Nome.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*) – Nome and Barrow.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Seen between Anchorage and Seward.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Nome and Barrow.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Fairly common almost throughout the trip. Particularly numerous in Nome.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Common in Anchorage, Nome, and Barrow. We also saw an Eurasian x American intergrade male with both horizontal and vertical white stripes in Barrow (where rare).

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – At least 4 were around Safety Sound, Nome, and another 3 were at Westchester Lagoon, Anchorage. The species is uncommon in both locations.

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – This was the common scaup encountered on the tour, with flock of hundreds in Safety Sound near Nome.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – 20 were at Westchester Lagoon, Anchorage.

STELLER'S EIDER (*Polysticta stelleri*) – Our travels around the Barrow road system were rewarded with fantastic looks at these small eiders along the edge of the tundra.

SPECTACLED EIDER (*Somateria fischeri*) – In Barrow, our views of these goggle-eyed seaducks were legendary. In a few cases, they were dabbling alongside the road like Mallards!

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*) – A few were in ponds around Barrow, and then we found a flock camped out on the sea ice with Common Eiders. One male in a pond close to the road gave us some nice chances to study its fine colors.

COMMON EIDER (PACIFIC) (*Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*) – Great views in Nome of the carrot orange bills of the males of this distinctive Pacific race. We also found some on the ice in Barrow next to King Eiders.

HARLEQUIN DUCK (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) – These handsome seaducks were in Nome, but our best looks came with the flock of 25 in Seward.

SURF SCOTER (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – We tallied fourteen of these blocky seaducks on our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (NORTH AMERICAN) (*Melanitta fusca deglandi*) – A large flock passed by at the edge of the fog in Nome. Photos showed that these were the brown-flanked (males) American subspecies *deglandi*, without any obvious male Asian *stegneri* present.

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta americana*) – Four were along the seafront in Nome.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*) – Fairly common, especially in Nome and Barrow. One at Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage was unexpected for the date.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – A female was paddling around just upstream from the Nome River bridge.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala islandica*) – Fabulous looks at two birds sitting on a dock and then swimming around at Summit Lake during our drive to Seward.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – Just a few were seen in montane lakes during our drive between Anchorage and Seward.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – A regular sight in Nome, and we found a few more in Barrow, too.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILLOW PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus lagopus*) – These open-land grouse posed beautifully for us on the Kougarak and Teller Roads in Nome. The males brazenly defend patches of the roads and will come out to challenge passing vehicles - dangerous business!

ROCK PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus muta*) – The male that was camped out at the top of the curlew hill on Kougarak Road let us admire his red eye combs from very close range. There was likely a female hidden on a nest somewhere close by.

Gaviidae (Loons)

RED-THROATED LOON (*Gavia stellata*) – Common in Nome; one was in Barrow, too.

ARCTIC LOON (*Gavia arctica*) – Our first evening in Nome produced 2 of these rare (for North America) loons. After spotting them from the vans, we got out and put up the scopes, which let us see the white "hip" patch and darker hindneck and blocky head (in comparison to pale-necked, smooth-headed Pacific Loons). The Seward Peninsula is the epicenter for this bird's breeding distribution in North America.

PACIFIC LOON (*Gavia pacifica*) – We found these beautiful loons on several occasions in Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – One in Safety Sound, Nome was a bit of a surprise for the location. We also found this familiar loon during the drive between Anchorage and Seward.

YELLOW-BILLED LOON (*Gavia adamsii*) – A few scoped flybys in Barrow were all we got out of *Gavia adamsii* this year. The main crack in the ice was far enough offshore that most of the birds were able to simply stay out of sight.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

RED-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps grisegena*) – The nesting birds at Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage are a major delight. It's amazing enough to hear the weird calls from this grebe, but even cooler to see their low-profile floating nest platforms out in the water. How on earth do those eggs stay dry?

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

SOOTY SHEARWATER (*Ardenna grisea*) – One appeared briefly during our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

RED-FACED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax urile*) – These Bering Sea specialties seem to be doing just fine near the mouth of Resurrection Bay near Seward. We tallied around 32 of the hardy, colorful cormorants.

PELAGIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – Around 85 were seen during our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Common around the Seward area.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – Repeated good views in Nome. I suspect that the harriers were keyed in on the same food source (voles?) that was supporting large numbers of Short-eared Owls in the Nome area.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Common in the Anchorage-Seward area.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*) – We saw these big, striking buteos a few times around Nome, and even got to see an active nest on a cliff face. [N]

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – These were around Safety Sound, Nome and also in the Anchorage area.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

BLACK OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus bachmani*) – Two flew right by the boat on our Kenai Fjords trip in response to our whistling. They ended up so close that we could see the striking yellow of their eyes.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – A regular sight in the uplands around Nome and also along the road system in Barrow.

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – These plovers were seen best around the Nome River mouth. In the Nome area, they prefer wetter areas closer to the coast while American Golden-Plovers are usually on drier inland tundra.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – We found these American ringed-plovers a few times in Nome and Barrow.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Two were along Cake Eater Rd. in Barrow, where they are rare.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WHIMBREL (HUDSONIAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – A few were along the coast in Nome, but our best looks came during our curlew search near Coffee Dome.

BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW (*Numenius tahitiensis*) – Shortly after exiting our vehicles near Coffee Dome, a Bristle-thighed Curlew began to sing off to the south of our parking site. However, try as we might, we couldn't spot the bird! A few hours of hiking around the lumpy tundra also failed to turn up a visual encounter, so we went with the heard-only experience this year. [*]

HUDSONIAN GODWIT (*Limosa haemastica*) – 36 were at Westchester Lagoon during a mid-tour stop in Anchorage.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*) – Two were distant at the Nome River bridge, but our best views were of a close female in the middle of the Teller Road. These incredible athletes migrate across the Pacific Ocean in fall to winter around Australia/ New Zealand.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – A few were along the edge of Safety Sound near Nome.

BLACK TURNSTONE (*Arenaria melanocephala*) – We saw up to 4 at the mouth of Safety Sound near Nome.

SURFBIRD (*Calidris virgata*) – An amazing 17 were foraging along the mouth of Safety Sound near Nome. This is a tough species to find reliably along the Nome road system in spring (they nest on rocky upland tundra in the area, but at very low density and away from roads), so we were very happy!

RED-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*) – A bright male was foraging with Western Sandpipers near the hunting cabins at Safety Sound during our Nome visit. Later, in Barrow, we found 3 more, including a territorial male that was making regular song flights and chasing other shorebirds out of his territory.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – One was with the Surfbirds and Black Turnstones near the mouth of Safety Sound in Nome.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – A few were mixed in with other small shorebirds at Nome, and then we found plenty on territory in Barrow.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (*Calidris bairdii*) – Only a couple of birds showed up for us in Barrow, but they were close and gave nice looks at their sandy-gray coloration and long wings.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Fairly common in the Nome area, especially near the coast.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*Calidris melanotos*) – These were on breeding territories all over Barrow, and we regularly saw puff-breasted males floating along singing their hooting songs. Fantastic birds!

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – A common breeder in Barrow, and in Nome - we got to compare these to the more numerous Western Sandpipers and also to a Red-necked Stint.

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*) – This was the most common peep at Nome during our visit. It's a real treat to see this species in its rust-and-black breeding ornamentation.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – This is the common dowitcher around Cook Inlet. Ours were roosting with Hudsonian Godwits at Westchester Lagoon.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – Great views on the North Slope at Barrow. This species breeds farther north than Short-billed Dowitcher.

WILSON'S SNIBE (*Gallinago delicata*) – We heard and saw several in Nome. One was also at the roadside in Barrow, where less expected.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – Fairly common in Nome and Barrow.

RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – These stunning shorebirds are quite common right along the edges of the roads in Barrow, where they breed. Seeing a female Red Phalarope up close in breeding plumage is something that takes your breath away - what a bird!

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – One was bobbing on the rocks along a river crossed by the Teller Road in Nome.

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*) – One showed nicely at the last minute as we were about to leave Seward. It was teetering and wandering (but not tattling) along a stream outlet mixed in with a big flock of loafing gulls.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – One was heard calling in Anchorage at the beginning of the tour.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Seen in Anchorage at the beginning of the tour.

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

POMARINE JAEGER (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) – Daily counts of 3 and 5 in Barrow, where the species breeds. This was likely a low year for lemming populations here - in big lemming years, Poms (and Snowy Owls) can be all over the tundra in Barrow.

PARASITIC JAEGER (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – Small numbers were found daily in Nome, and we picked up a few more while seawatching in Barrow.

LONG-TAILED JAEGER (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – Good numbers loafing around on the coastal tundra at Nome, where we had a maximum of 13 one day. It was incredible to be so close to these elegant predators.

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*) – Thousands were around breeding colonies during our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

THICK-BILLED MURRE (*Uria lomvia*) – We picked out about 10 from the legions of Common Murres at the "Beehive" during the Kenai Fjords boat trip.

BLACK GUILLEMOT (*Cepphus grylle*) – Two were fishing along the rocks at Cape Nome (fun ID challenge!), and we saw a couple more swimming and loafing with eiders later along Point Barrow.

PIGEON GUILLEMOT (*Cepphus columba*) – We tallied 28 of these nearshore auks around the Seward area from the boat.

MARBLED MURRELET (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – We saw about 18 of these tree-nesting alcids during our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

KITTLITZ'S MURRELET (*Brachyramphus brevirostris*) – At the last minute around the glacial moraines in Kenai Fjords NP, we found a pair of these rare, stubby-billed alcids.

ANCIENT MURRELET (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) – Small groups totaling 11 birds flushed up in front of our boat near the Chiswell Islands during our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

PARAKEET AUKLET (*Aethia psittacula*) – We tucked the boat into a calm cove near the Chiswell Islands and saw 14 of these strange, chunky alcids during the Kenai Fjords trip. This is the southeastern outpost of this Bering Sea species.

RHINOCEROS AUKLET (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – Our Kenai Fjords trip turned up a dozen of these small puffins (more closely related to puffins than the other auklets).

HORNED PUFFIN (*Fratercula corniculata*) – We had plenty of up-close views of these fine seabirds during our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

TUFTED PUFFIN (*Fratercula cirrhata*) – The air was full of Tufted Puffins when we were idling next to the Beehive in the Chiswell Islands on our Kenai Fjords boat trip - a memorable moment for sure!

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) – Quite common during our Kenai Fjords boat trip, and a few more were offshore at Nome, too.

SABINE'S GULL (*Xema sabini*) – One was seen briefly as it passed by Cape Nome at some distance.

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – A few were seen during the Kenai Fjords boat trip.

MEW GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*) – Common in Nome, Anchorage, and the Seward area.

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – A few were mixed in with other large gulls around Seward.

HERRING GULL (VEGA) (*Larus argentatus vegae*) – At least one immature bird was seen in flight along the coast in Nome. This is the Asian form of Herring Gull.

SLATY-BACKED GULL (*Larus schistisagus*) – A stocky-billed immature gave us some brief views kiting in the wind at Cape Nome.

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL (*Larus glaucescens*) – Quite common around the Seward area.

GLAUCOUS GULL (*Larus hyperboreus*) – Common in Nome and Barrow.

ALEUTIAN TERN (*Onychoprion aleuticus*) – These rare seabirds were nesting on an island in the mouth of the Nome River. We had the fortune to be standing on the Nome River bridge when a Parasitic Jaeger chased a frantic Aleutian Tern right past our vantage point - wow!

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Common around Anchorage and also in Nome.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Common only in the Anchorage-Seward area. There was a flock of pigeons hanging out along the base of the Teller Road in Nome, too. [H]

Strigidae (Owls)

SNOWY OWL (*Bubo scandiacus*) – Two were in Barrow. One, a plain white adult male, was sitting in an unused lot in town on our first day, allowing for great scope views.

SHORT-EARED OWL (*Asio flammeus*) – Unusually common in Nome, including 8 on our first afternoon along the Council Road. One came right toward us after a bit of squeaking, and even hovered next to the vehicles for a moment.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*) – We found a few hummers buzzing in to Ava's feeders near Seward.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – A few were seen in flight in the Anchorage-Seward corridor.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – Active and vocal around Ava's feeders in Seward.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – A whole noisy family was zooming around Ava's yard in Seward.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*) – We had the fortunate to see adults at a nest in the Nome area. One very pale bird was also soaring over a distant hilltop during our day on the Kougarok Road.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Several sightings at Nome and Barrow, including a close pass right overhead at the base of Point Barrow.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

ALDER FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax alnorum*) – Heard a few times around Seward. [*]

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GRAY JAY (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – Good views in several of the campgrounds we visited between Anchorage and Seward in search of Spruce Grouse.

STELLER'S JAY (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – Close looks near Seward.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Common between Anchorage and Seward.

NORTHWESTERN CROW (*Corvus caurinus*) – One was in Girdwood, and many more were flying around the harbor in Seward.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Common during most of our travels, though we only saw one around Barrow on this trip.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – One was along the Teller Road in Nome.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Plenty were around Nome, Anchorage, and Seward.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – A few were flying overhead in the Anchorage to Seward area.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – We saw several in Nome, often mixed with Cliff Swallows.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Good views of small groups nesting under bridges in Nome.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Common in the Anchorage-Seward area.

CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE (*Poecile rufescens*) – We found a few in moist conifer forest near Bear Lake, Seward.

BOREAL CHICKADEE (*Poecile hudsonicus*) – These shy chickadees showed fairly well in campgrounds near Seward during our Spruce Grouse hunts.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – Just a few were in the huge conifers near Bear Lake where we found the Pacific Wren.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

PACIFIC WREN (*Troglodytes pacificus*) – A singing bird near Bear Lake put on quite a show up top of a stump at the edge of the forest.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – We saw these special songbirds in creeks near Bear Lake and at a campground upslope from Seward.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) – We actually found a nest in the forest near the Bear Lake Weir. [N]

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – Common in forest between Anchorage and Seward.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)

ARCTIC WARBLER (*Phylloscopus borealis*) – Abundant in and around Nome during our visit, a startling difference from 2015 when we couldn't find ANY here (they arrived just after we left). Excellent views of these Old World warblers.

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

BLUETHROAT (*Luscinia svecica*) – A few snazzy males showed nicely in Nome along the Kougarok and Teller roads.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) – A pair put on a good performance in dry, rocky tundra along the Teller Road out of Nome.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*) – Downright abundant in the Nome area.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH (*Catharus ustulatus*) – Good views in the Seward area.

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*) – Singing and seen well near Bear Lake, Seward.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Common around Nome, Anchorage, and Seward.

VARIED THRUSH (*Ixoreus naevius*) – A few individuals came out in the open during our Spruce Grouse hunts near Seward.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common around Anchorage. [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

EASTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla tschutschensis*) – Several good views in Nome, mostly along the Council Road.

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – One close bird along the Kougarok Road out of Nome was particularly memorable.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

LAPLAND LONGSPUR (*Calcarius lapponicus*) – Quite common in Nome and Barrow.

SNOW BUNTING (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) – A few were in Nome, but these were downright common around the city of Barrow.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Common in Nome and the area between Anchorage and Seward.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Good views a few times in the Nome area.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Heard often and seen well around Nome.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – Heard frequently around Nome. [*]

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (*Setophaga coronata*) – We saw these widespread warblers several times between Anchorage and Seward.

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga townsendi*) – Heard and seen several times in the huge conifer forests near Seward.

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*) – Seen frequently in the Nome area and also around Seward.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW (*Spizelloides arborea*) – Good views around Nome.

FOX SPARROW (SOOTY) (*Passerella iliaca sinuosa*) – These dark Fox Sparrows of the humid Pacific Northwest were in forest and edge habitat around Seward.

FOX SPARROW (RED) (*Passerella iliaca zaboria*) – The zaboria subspecies of Fox Sparrow was the form we found in thickets around Nome.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED) (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*) – Seen several times around the Anchorage-Seward area.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – Common and widespread in Nome and between Anchorage and Seward.

GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) – Singing and seen well in riverside thickets near Nome.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Common around Nome and Barrow.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – We saw the large coastal form at Ava's house in Seward.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*) – Seen nicely at our picnic lunch spot on the Teller Road in Nome.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RUSTY BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus carolinus*) – A few showed up in the thickets at our Teller Road lunch spot in Nome.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

PINE GROSBEAK (*Pinicola enucleator*) – These huge finches were swarming around Ava's feeders near Seward; others were in the campgrounds we visited between Anchorage and Seward.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – We heard one of these nomadic finches near Seward.

COMMON REDPOLL (*Acanthis flammea*) – Common around Nome.

HOARY REDPOLL (*Acanthis hornemanni*) – We saw these pale redpolls several times in Nome and Barrow. It seems possible, perhaps even likely, that this "species" will be lumped with Common Redpoll in the near future.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – About 15 were at the feeders at Ava's place in Seward.

MAMMALS

SNOWSHOE HARE (*Lepus americanus*) – One was on the Kougarok Road out of Nome.

ARCTIC GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus parryi*) – We saw these several times on the tundra in the Nome area.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – Several were in the campgrounds near Seward where we searched for grouse.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – One was near Seward.

RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*) – One was near the edge of the road on our last day in Nome.

BROWN (INCL. GRIZZLY) BEAR (*Ursus arctos*) – We had two sightings in the Nome area. One was far off the side of the Kougarok Road, and a mother with two cubs was wandering along the Teller Road, too.

POLAR BEAR (*Ursus maritimus*) – Wow! This huge Arctic predator was sleeping on top of a huge chunk of ice near the base of Point Barrow. Thanks to Stephan Lorenz for kindly pointing this treasure out to our group.

SEA OTTER (*Enhydra lutris*) – Several were in Resurrection Bay near Seward. During our Kenai Fjords boat trip, we saw one eating a Giant Pacific Octopus. Check out Dave's photo of the startling event.

STELLER'S SEA LION (*Eumetopias jubatus*) – Several of these large, blonde pinnipeds were lounging on rocks during our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

HARBOR SEAL (*Phoca vitulina*) – Common around Seward during our boat trip.

SPOTTED SEAL (*Phoca largha*) – A few were scoped on the ice offshore from Barrow.

MOOSE (*Alces alces*) – The large specimen galloping through the fog along the Council Road in Nome was very impressive!

MOUNTAIN GOAT (*Oreamnos americanus*) – We scoped a few of these sure-footed mammals on slopes above Tern Lake near Seward.

MUSKCOX (*Ovibos moschatus*) – These moving shag carpets were found on each of our days in the Nome area, often munching on willows.

DALL'S SHEEP (*Ovis dalli*) – A few people glimpsed these sheep on the cliffs above Turnagain Arm between Girdwood and Anchorage.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 163 bird taxa and 15 mammal taxa