



Field Guides Tour Report

Alaska II - Part Two (Nome, Seward & Barrow) 2017

Jun 13, 2017 to Jun 23, 2017

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Spectacled Eider is always one of the more highly-anticipated sightings of the tour, so this year's point blank views were a big hit! Photo by guide Doug Gochfeld.

The second part of our grand Alaska adventure took us from the gloriously untamed country around Nome on the Seward peninsula, to the Kenai peninsula with its huge Sitka spruces and scenic fjords, to the frozen seas and thawing tundra around Barrow, at the very edge of North America -- and to some urban parks in and around the city of Anchorage itself. The variety of habitats meant a fine variety of birds as well, with new species debuting on each leg of the trip.

We were greeted, upon our arrival into Nome, by some spectacularly lovely weather, which continued for most of the rest of the trip. On a balmy afternoon along the coast, we delighted in close views of a convenient mix of Arctic and Aleutian terns (some right over our heads), an Arctic Loon rolling in the surf just offshore, a big mob of Muskrats right on the road, masses of Common Eiders (with a surprise male Spectacled Eider snoozing among a flock on the beach), and an even dozen Red-necked Stints pattering among the Semipalmated and Western sandpipers. Our day along the Kougarak road took us deep into the Seward Peninsula's interior. Arctic Warblers shouted challenges from roadside willow trees, a male Bluethroat dazzled as he perched atop scrub between song flights, a mama Gyrfalcon tore some hapless prey to shreds and fed the bits to her three fluffy youngsters while dad cooled his heels nearby, two Golden Eagles spiraled slowly over the road, and a nice assortment of warblers, sparrows and thrushes disported themselves as we made our way inland. The highlight of the day for many, though, was our climb up a remote inland hill in a successful hunt for Bristle-thighed Curlew -- a preening bird seen so closely that we could even see her thigh bristles (plus her buffy rump and tail) through our binoculars. And we nearly stepped on a slow-moving male Rock Ptarmigan for good measure! Our final day, split along the Teller and Council roads, brought a slew of treats: a Northern Wheatear bouncing across a rocky hillside, with Horned Larks gathering insects nearby, a gaggle of Pacific Golden-Plovers trotting along a river edge, a quartet of Black Turnstones flipping stones on a mud bank, lazily circling kettles of Long-tailed Jaegers, a gang of Bar-tailed Godwits snoozing in a rocky river, a Short-eared Owl gazing at us from its tundra perch, and an all-too-brief encounter with a vagrant Great Knot that initially defied identification while it preened just beyond a muddy islet at the Nome River mouth.

From there, it was on to Seward, with a stop en route to enjoy a family of just-fledged American Dippers waiting impatiently for one parent to bring food while the other parent busily refurbished a nearby nest. Our all-day boat trip in Kenai Fjords National Park -- on Resurrection Bay, out to the Chiswell Islands and up Aialik Bay as far as the Aialik glacier -- was a definite highlight. On yet another gorgeous day, we notched up superb views of a host of waterbirds and mammals. A lunge-feeding Humpback Whale and her calf got things off to a dynamic start. A Red-faced Cormorant made multiple circles around our boat before heading back to the cliff where it had been perched among a host of Pelagic Cormorants. Dapper Pigeon Guillemots floated beside rocky, spruce-clad islets. Mixed flocks of Horned and Tufted puffins dove for food or flew past, wings whirring. Grizzled Ancient Murrelets paddled warily near the Chiswells. A couple of female Mountain Goats rested on an impressively steep slope, with a couple of small kids in close attendance. Herds of Rhinoceros Auklets gathered near the mouth of Aialik Bay, with endearing rafts of Sea Otters huddled up not far beyond. Marbled and Kittlitz's murrelets repeatedly dove and popped up in the calm waters as we neared the edge of the ice chunks calved from the Aialik glacier, allowing some fine comparisons. A noisy pair of Black Oystercatchers piped from a rocky shore. And the combination of placid sea,

bright sun, snowy mountain peaks, dark green spruce forest and blue glacial ice made for some great photographs! Back on shore, visits to a few nearby suburbs netted us busy families of White-winged Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks, a point-blank Chestnut-backed Chickadee gathering food, a Wandering Tattler probing a rocky shoreline, Northwestern Crows rummaging on roadsides, some impressively dark "Sooty" Fox Sparrows, and lots of salmon leaping past a weir. A bit of trail walking on our way back to Anchorage yielded a very noisy American Three-toed Woodpecker nestling protruding from a hole, with two parents ferrying in mouthfuls just as fast as they could manage.

We finished the trip in Barrow, at the northernmost edge of the United States. Top prizes here included close looks at two of the rarer eiders -- Steller's and Spectacled -- plus a few distant drake King Eiders. Red and Red-necked phalaropes, in their handsomest breeding finery, spun on puddles or chased each other in flashing flights across the tundra. Big-chested Pectoral Sandpipers defended their territories in booming display flights. Menacing pairs of Parasitic Jaegers (plus a few scattered Pomarines) patrolled the rumpled landscape, searching for something tasty. Our first rather distant female Snowy Owl was followed by a much closer male, near enough that we could see his buttercup-yellow eyes. A couple of Baird's Sandpipers probed a puddle edge, with a Semipalmated Sandpiper nearby for convenient comparison. A trio of Yellow-billed Loons winged past over the icy shoreline. And, on our very last afternoon around Anchorage, we FINALLY added Hudsonian Godwit to our list, when we found a group foraging along the edge of Turnagain Arm as the tide surged in at Westchester Lagoon.

Thanks so much for joining Doug and me for this Alaskan adventure. It was fun sharing time in the field with you all, and your patience with some less-than-ideal conditions (darn those van rental places) was much appreciated. We hope to see you again, somewhere, someday!

-- Megan (and Doug)

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*) – Surprisingly common in Barrow this year, with dozens of pairs dotted across the tundra. None of them seemed to be nesting yet.

BRANT (BLACK) (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) – Scores of distant birds foraged in the waters of Safety Sound, looking particularly dark compared to the ubiquitous Glaucous Gulls. We saw a single bird on one of the ponds along Freshwater Lake Road in Barrow. European taxonomists break this taxon out as a separate species.

CACKLING GOOSE (*Branta hutchinsii*) – A group along the Council road on our last morning in Nome helped solved the mystery of their identification by calling and removing all doubt! The boundaries of the Canada/Cackling goose split -- and the best ways of separating the similar subspecies (*parvipes* and *taverneri*) found around Nome -- are still a matter of some debate.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Very common at Westchester Lagoon, where dozens floated in the main pond. The subspecies found here is *parvipes*.

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*) – Superb views of a pair preening on a roadside pond -- surrounded by bright yellow water lilies -- en route to Seward.

TUNDRA SWAN (WHISTLING) (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) – Regular around Barrow, where we saw a number of pairs strolling across the tundra or floating on the smaller, ice-free ponds. We had others along the Council and Kougarok roads in Nome, though most of the bigger staging flocks appeared to have already dispersed.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – A pair drifted along the front edge of the little island in the main pond at Westchester Lagoon on one of our visits, and those in Doug's van spotted others on a pond on the drive back from Seward.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*) – Dozens on ponds and back bays along the Council road east of Nome -- including a big group weaving in and out of the Brant flock -- with others on the main pond at Westchester Lagoon.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Particularly common at Westchester Lagoon, where we saw several watchful mamas trailing gangs of fluffy ducklings. We had a few pairs along the Council road as well.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Daily around Nome, with a single female on the pond at Westchester Lagoon.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Common in the tundra ponds around Nome and Barrow.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Regular throughout the tour (especially in the puddles and back bays along the Council road east of Nome), though missing from much of the Kenai peninsula.

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – By far the more widespread of the scaup species on this tour, seen on most days of the trip.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – Principally at Westchester Lagoon, where we saw multiple pairs in nice comparison with the previous species. We had a handful of others in a roadside puddle near Tern Lake on our way back from Seward.

STELLER'S EIDER (*Polysticta stelleri*) – Our first were a pair waddling across the tundra on Freshwater Lake Road. We saw others there as well, but our best views came on Gaswell Road, where we found a pair in a puddle right beside the road. This is the smallest of the eiders, and the only member of its genus.

SPECTACLED EIDER (*Somateria fischeri*) – Wow! We'd already had some pretty nice views of this handsome species -- a male snoozing on a Nome beach among a bunch of Common Eiders, and several pairs along the Freshwater Lake and Gaswell roads -- but the male that flew in and landed right beside us on the Gaswell road was just, well, OUTSTANDING!

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*) – Small numbers in Barrow, including a trio of drakes floating on a pond along the Gaswell road. Unlike the other eiders, males of this species are primarily black -- except for their colorful heads and beaks, that is!

COMMON EIDER (PACIFIC) (*Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*) – Very common around Nome, with scores seen snoozing on shorelines or floating on the sea and the sound. They were far less common in Barrow, where we saw only a handful passing by offshore. The all-white backs of the males (and their black caps) made them easy to pick out.

HARLEQUIN DUCK (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) – Our best looks came at Lowell Point, when we found four (three males and a female) snoozing not far from our Wandering Tattler -- though we didn't spot them until we'd actually got the scopes out, they blended in so well with the surrounding

- duck-sized boulders! We saw others on the Kenai Fjords boat trip, and (for some) floating in the Nome River on our drive up the Kougarok road.
- SURF SCOTER** (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – A flock of a dozen or so crossed our bow as we headed out of Resurrection Bay on our boat trip, wrapping up our scoter "sweep" for the tour.
- WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (NORTH AMERICAN)** (*Melanitta fusca deglandi*) – A few floated in the sea with a Black Scoter, seen as we worked our way along the Council road.
- BLACK SCOTER** (*Melanitta americana*) – Our best looks probably came along the Kougarok road, where we found a couple of bright-billed males (what a pop of orange!) with a female on one of the lakes en route to Coffee Dome. We saw others on the sea along the Council road on each of our visits there.
- LONG-TAILED DUCK** (*Clangula hyemalis*) – Common around both Barrow and Nome, including some that were already showing signs of their winter plumage again. The loud calls of the males give them their onomatopoeic Inupiaq name -- Aahaaliq, pronounced "A-ha-leck".
- BUFFLEHEAD** (*Bucephala albeola*) – A few -- mostly males -- sprinkled among the other ducks on the back bays along the Council road east of Nome.
- BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala islandica*) – A young male floated off Lowell Point on our last morning in Seward, spotted as we scoped the Wandering Tattler along the beach. Some of the group spotted a female on Tern Lake, while waiting for us to prepare the picnic lunch.
- COMMON MERGANSER** (*Mergus merganser*) – A few scattered birds, including a male with a group of Red-breasted Mergansers along the Council road, and another making circle after circle after circle over Ava's house.
- RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (*Mergus serrator*) – Very common around Nome, floating on the sea, the Nome River, and just about every little puddle we passed along the Council road.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

- WILLOW PTARMIGAN** (*Lagopus lagopus*) – Our first bird, found singing from a telephone pole along the Kougarok Road, may just have set an altitude record for the Nome area. Good thing we stopped to look at that swallow! Its lofty perch gave us a great chance to study it at leisure, and it even did a few noisy display flights past us. A female along the Teller Road had us dreaming briefly of Rock Ptarmigans.
- ROCK PTARMIGAN** (*Lagopus muta*) – A point-blank male shuffling through the short tundra atop the hill we climbed near Coffee Dome was a bonus during our visit there. He was certainly wary, ducking down out of view as we approached, but soon reappeared, nibbling his way through the lichens and around the frost heaved patches of earth. That dark lore stripe, easily visible on our bird, is diagnostic.

Gaviidae (Loons)

- RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*) – Very common around Nome, with smaller numbers in Barrow. We had especially nice close scope looks at the first pair we found, in a small pond right on the edge of the city. This is the smallest of the loons.
- ARCTIC LOON** (*Gavia arctica*) – One rolling in the surf right off the beach along the Council road gave us great view, particularly when it stopped preening and paddled further out into the sea. The combination of heavier bill, less frosty nape, bolder neck stripes and white patch along the waterline helps to separate it from the next species.
- PACIFIC LOON** (*Gavia pacifica*) – Good looks just about everywhere we went, including several pairs rolling in the surf along the Council road east of Nome, a few floating among the Chiswells on our boat tour, and pairs fishing in the shallow ponds along Freshwater road in Barrow. We had some nice comparisons between this and the previous species in Nome.
- COMMON LOON** (*Gavia immer*) – A trio interacting under the bridge at Safety Sound gave us some superb views. We saw others on the Seward boat trip, and a more distant bird on Resurrection Bay from Lowell Point.
- YELLOW-BILLED LOON** (*Gavia adamsii*) – A handful of flybys on Stevenson road in Barrow, including two over town (while some were still checking out the material/gift shop) and a further three or four over the old airstrip near the hunt camp. This is the largest of the loons.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

- RED-NECKED GREBE** (*Podiceps grisegena*) – Scattered birds on various ponds, including one floating not far from our first Trumpeter Swans. We also watched a pair bringing mouthfuls of soggy vegetation to their floating nest at Westchester, where we counted nearly dozen on our final visit (far lower than the regular number). [N]

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

- RED-FACED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax urile*) – One circled around and around our boat in Kenai Fjords NP, trying to decide whether or not it should return to the cliff it had flushed from; we had great looks at it, both flying and -- eventually -- perched, when it finally landed again. We saw another swimming with Pelagic Cormorants in the Chiswell Islands. This species is relatively uncommon along the Kenai peninsula.
- PELAGIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – By far the most common cormorant on our Seward boat trip, with scores lining cliff ledges, diving in the sea or flying past our boat. Their small size, very slim neck, dark bill and less colorful face help to separate them from the previous species.
- DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Less common than the previous species, but seen in a few places on Resurrection Bay during our boat trip. Its orange gular pouch and lores help to separate it from the smaller, darker, slimmer necked Pelagic Cormorant.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

- OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – One perched on a telephone pole along the Kougarok road was a surprise; this is not a common species on the Seward peninsula.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

- GOLDEN EAGLE** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Our best looks came along the Kougarok road, where we found a pair circling over the road, not far from a rugged cliff where they may have been nesting. We saw others along the Teller road, over Mile 34 Ridge.
- NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – Daily around Nome, typically teetering low over the tundra.
- BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Most common in and around Seward, where they proved almost ridiculously common, even perching atop the mast of a boat in the harbor. The pair with their fluffy youngsters in a nest overlooking Westchester Lagoon were entertaining -- though they certainly stressed out the gulls and terns nesting on the island there! [N]
- RED-TAILED HAWK (HARLAN'S)** (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) – Seen on our drives to and from Seward -- though never well, and never for long. The one gliding along the ridge line above our snoozing Dall's Sheep disappeared before everybody found it, and the other was too high over the vehicles for those in some seats to find it out the windows.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*) – Regular around Nome, including several in flight along the Kougarok and Teller roads, and a female adding sticks to her nest in a crevice not far from the Gyrfalcon nest. [N]

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – Our first pair strolled across the grassy bank behind a pond near Safety Sound -- good spotting, Suzanne! We had a flock of 19 fly past in a wavering line while we birded the Nome River mouth on our final morning there.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

BLACK OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus bachmani*) – We had fine views of a couple of pairs on some of the stony islets we passed on our Seward boat trip -- including one pair perched high on (and eventually calling and displaying from) a rocky ledge.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – A vocal pair on the hilltop kept us entertained while we searched for Bristle-thighed Curlews, and we had good views of another at our picnic site on Mile 34 Ridge northwest of Nome. This species was reasonably common in the tundra around Barrow, seen in small numbers along most of the roads.

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – A gang of nearly a dozen trotted around on the grassy shores of the Nome River mouth one morning, accompanied by a Ruddy Turnstone. This and the previous species were formerly lumped as "Lesser Golden-Plover".

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Regular in small numbers around Nome, with another handful around Barrow, including one pattering along a muddy island near the start of Cake-eater road. It was fun to see one doing its butterfly-wing display flight (complete with audio) over the restroom and parking lot at Salmon Lake, on our way up the Kougarok road.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WHIMBREL (HUDSONIAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – Fine views of several atop the hill where we looked for curlews. This one is less patterned on the back than the next species, and more uniformly colored overall.

BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW (*Numenius tahitiensis*) – Yahoo! After a wet slog up the hill -- battling epic numbers of mosquitoes on the way -- we almost literally stumbled across one of these rare birds quietly preening on the tundra. She stood for a long time poking her long bill into various bits of plumage (including her backside, which exposed that distinctively buffy rump and tail) before shifting to another mound slightly further away. Through the scopes, we could even see the bristles on her thighs!

HUDSONIAN GODWIT (*Limosa haemastica*) – It took multiple visits, but we FINALLY connected with nearly a dozen of these leggy shorebirds as they foraged along the muddy edge of Turnagain Arm, seen from the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in Anchorage.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*) – A group of 8 or 9 snoozed on a gravel bar in the middle of the Sinuk River, along the Teller road; they were a real mix of colors, with some brick red males and some nearly cream females. A few fed or preened, but most looked pretty tuckered out!

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – One pattered among the flock of Pacific Golden-Plovers we found on the banks of the Nome River mouth, another foraged near the shore of Freshwater Lake, and a couple of others rummaged along the edge of the Salt Lagoons in Barrow.

BLACK TURNSTONE (*Arenaria melanocephala*) – At least two mooched along the edge of the Nome River mouth, looking for tasty morsels.

GREAT KNOT (*Calidris tenuirostris*) – Arg! One of these shorebirds stood on a muddy islets in the Nome River mouth, looking big compared to the nearby terns. We quickly realized it was something different and got the scopes on it, but only a few got a look (and we were still working out what it was) before it leapt up and winged off across the river and away along the coast. Drat!

RED-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*) – It was definitely a good year for these normally uncommon shorebirds! We spotted at least a dozen around Nome: four at the Nome River mouth, four at Safety Sound, and four more on scattered mudflats along the Council road.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Some in mixed shorebird flocks along the Council road, and others sprinkled across the tundra around Barrow. In their breeding plumage, it's easy to see how they earned their former name -- Red-backed Sandpiper.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (*Calidris bairdii*) – A couple foraged busily along the edge of the mud at a wet corner in Barrow, showing the long wings of this big peep. Conveniently, there was a Semipalmated Sandpiper was along with them for easy comparison.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – A scattering along the Council and Kougarok roads around Nome; their pale legs helped give them away.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*Calidris melanotos*) – If you've only ever seen Pectoral Sandpipers in the Lower 48, nothing quite prepares you for the big chested bruisers the males become on the breeding grounds of the far north. We had plenty of great views of these common shorebirds as they surveyed their territories from frost heave mounds or sparred over the tundra around Barrow. And what a unique throbbing sound they make as they chase each other around!

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – Regular around Nome and Barrow, including one in nice comparison with a couple of Baird's Sandpipers along the edge of Stevenson road in Barrow, and scores pattering along the edges of the bays along the Council road.

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*) – Common through much of the tour, with especially close views of some along Freshwater Lake road in Barrow, and nice comparisons between this species and the previous one along the Council road near Nome.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – A little group of seven gathered on the islet in the biggest pond at Westchester Lagoon during one of our visits. They scuttled along the edge of the water, taking the occasional swipe at their feathers, before flying off over the railway line.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – Pairs strolled through the grasses around many of the puddles and ponds at Barrow, their bright rusty plumage blending surprisingly well with the winter-browned vegetation.

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – An adult with two strikingly brick-orange little fluffballs in tow bumped through foot-high willows along the edge of the Kougarok road, clambered up a little hill and disappeared into taller bushes. What cuties the little ones were!

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – The more numerous of the tour's phalaropes, common along the Council road in Nome (and around the Nome River mouth), with many others on the ponds around Barrow.

RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – Common around Barrow, where they spun on puddles, foraged in the short tundra and chased each other in frantic little packs across the sky. And now we know why we call them RED Phalaropes!

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – One bobbed along the edge of the Teller road, showing its spotty breast nicely.

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*) – One foraged along the stony edge of Resurrection Bay, a highlight of our morning outing in Lowell Point. Through the scopes, we could see all the fine details of its plumage, including the fine vermiculations on its underparts.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – A few on each of our visits to Westchester Lagoon. Sometimes they were sprinting around shallow waterways in pursuit of prey, sometimes they were snoozing on muddy islets with their beaks tucked firmly under their wings.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – A handful seen on each of our visits to Westchester Lagoon, with nice comparisons between this and the previous species on a muddy little island in one of the ponds near the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

POMARINE JAEGER (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) – Small numbers around Barrow, mostly flying past looking vaguely menacing. This is the biggest of the jaegers.

PARASITIC JAEGER (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – We had nice looks at these menacing thugs around Nome and Barrow, including a few on the ground along the Council road and a mixed pair (one dark morph, one light) chasing a tern near Safety Sound.

LONG-TAILED JAEGER (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – Most common around Nome, particularly along the Kougarok and Teller roads; we saw a group of more than 50 circling over the tundra on the Teller road, plus some "on the deck" (and possibly on nests) there as well.

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*) – Very common in Kenai Fjords NP, where we saw them in flight, swimming around the boat, and diving after food. Their long, slim shape and sharply-pointed beaks made them easy to pick out from the bulkier puffins.

PIGEON GUILLEMOT (*Cepphus columba*) – A few, in scattered pairs or singly, on the waters of Resurrection Bay and around the Chiswells. We were close enough we could clearly see the distinctive black wedge that extends into the white patch on their wings -- and that all-dark underwing when they flew.

MARbled MURRELET (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – The first murrelets we saw on our boat trip were this species -- darker and more common than the next; we got a nice close look at their brown faces when Tanya pulled our boat up right alongside a pair diving in Resurrection Bay. This species nests in old growth forests, laying their single egg on a branch, sometimes scores of miles from the nearest water!

KITTLITZ'S MURRELET (*Brachyramphus brevirostris*) – Doug tallied 14 during our sweep through Aialik bay -- including a good half dozen within meters of our boat. The paler face, smaller bill and white outer tail feathers help to separate this rare species from the somewhat more common previous one.

ANCIENT MURRELET (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) – At one point, as we steamed through the Chiswell Islands on our boat trip, we were surrounded by more than a dozen of these handsome seabirds. Their pale gray bodies and darker heads -- and those bright yellow beaks -- made them pretty easy to pick out from the others.

RHINOCEROS AUKLET (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – Dozens and dozens and DOZENS floated and dove on the waters of Aialik bay and around the Chiswell Islands, including one flock of more than 20. We were close enough to clearly see the spike on their beaks that give them their common name.

HORNED PUFFIN (*Fratercula corniculata*) – The more common of the two puffins on our boat trip this year, with dozens floating in rafts on the waters around the Chiswells and scores of others winging past our boat. Their white bellies helped to quickly separate them from the next species.

TUFTED PUFFIN (*Fratercula cirrhata*) – Less common than the previous species, but still seen well around the Chiswell Islands. The all black plumage, big orange bill and yellow "Barbie doll hair" tufts sported by this big puffin make it hard to mistake for anything else!

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) – A few rested on a sandy spit with a mob of other roosting gulls east of Nome, but we had our biggest numbers (and best looks) in the Kenai Fjords area -- particularly around the Seward harbor.

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Surprisingly scarce on this part of the trip, with only a single bird seen -- an immature bird padding around on a wide mudflat at Ship Creek with an "Anchorage Gull" (aka Glaucous-winged/American Herring Gull hybrid) in the background for size comparison.

MEW GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*) – Daily, often in good numbers. We got our best looks at Westchester Lagoon, where a noisy colony occupied the island closest to the parking lot; over the course of the tour, we got to see the initially small, spotty youngsters quickly grow and change. [N]

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – One on the beach at Westchester Lagoon looked like a "clean" member of this species (rather than one of the ubiquitous Herring/Glaucous-winged hybrids). The jet black (rather than charcoal gray) wingtips were a good sign.

HERRING GULL (VEGA) (*Larus argentatus vegae*) – Two along the Council road appeared to be this subspecies; they're somewhat darker-backed than our North American birds. The "Vega" subspecies, which breeds primarily in northeastern Siberia, is a rare but regular visitor to western Alaska.

THAYER'S GULL (*Larus thayeri*) – Some nice spotting by Doug netted us an immature bird on the beach near Nome; it certainly stood out from the Glaucous Gulls it was roosting with. Unfortunately for your life list, the AOU has just lumped this species back into Iceland Gull. Oh well -- you could "count" it for a few weeks, anyway!

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL (*Larus glaucescens*) – Abundant around Seward (where they were the common big gull) with a handful along the coast in Nome as well.

GLAUCOUS GULL (*Larus hyperboreus*) – Abundant around Nome and Barrow, where their all-white primaries quickly distinguish them from other gulls. It's always surprising how pale they look while standing on the ice floes!

ALEUTIAN TERN (*Onychoprion aleuticus*) – Regular along the coast around Nome, with some fine views of close birds flying over the bridge at the Nome River mouth, and others resting on the some of the little islets there. The call of this range-restricted species sounds a bit like that of the House Sparrow.

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Common and widespread, seen on all but one day of the tour, often in good numbers. We had especially nice studies of the birds at Westchester Lagoon -- a few on posts right near where we stood, and others resting on the shores of a little islet, showing well their amazingly stumpy, bright red legs. The fluffy youngsters were sure cute. [N]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

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

Strigidae (Owls)

SNOWY OWL (*Bubo scandiacus*) – Our first was a rather distant female sitting on a lump in the tundra, a long way off the Gaswell road; we worked our way slowly along the road, checking periodically, and found a place where she finally looked like a real owl, instead of a white bucket! Fortunately, we found what was probably her mate a bit further down the road -- a gleaming white male sitting just beyond the gas pipes. Their heads can swivel a long way around!

SHORT-EARED OWL (*Asio flammeus*) – Our first was seen (by some) over a very distant hillside as we birded the Nome River mouth.

Unfortunately, it dropped out of view before most got on it. Fortunately, we later had fabulous views of another along the Teller road; it crossed the road in front of us, flapped slowly along over the tundra, and eventually dropped down to land on a mound not far from the road, gazing at us with its big yellow eyes.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*) – Several -- including one penny-bright adult male -- visited the hummingbird feeders at Ava's. This is the only hummingbird species that regularly makes it to Alaska.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – Singles seen on each of our visits to Ava's, where they seemed particularly fond of the peanut butter log.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – Another visitor to the peanut butter log feeder at Ava's. The larger bill, larger overall size and lack of black markings on the outer tail feathers (all of which we could see, nicely compared with the previous species) help to identify it.

AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (*Picoides dorsalis*) – Some directions from an Alaskan friend led us to Divide trail, where we could hear baby woodpeckers yammering as soon as we stepped out of the vehicles. A short stroll up a woodland path later, we were enjoying fine views of a busy pair bringing mouthfuls to some very vociferous youngsters which popped in and out of their nest hole like little jack-in-the-boxes. [N]

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – Splendid views of one perched on the roof of one of the hunting shacks along the Council road east of Nome. We had another streak across the tundra in front of our vehicles on the Teller road.

GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*) – A quick scan of the regular breeding cliff along the Kougarok road seemed disappointing; the old nest seemed deserted. Fortunately, a more careful look turned up the small male, sitting by himself on a boulder at the top of the cliff. And once we'd found him, it didn't take us long to find this year's nest -- complete with three fluffy youngsters and mom feeding them bits of some hapless prey!

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – A big female danced in the sky north of the Council road, making the nearby jaegers look stodgy and slow by comparison. She was quite far away, but her classic crossbow shape -- and the speed with which she moved -- helped to identify her.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

ALDER FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax alnorum*) – Singles on several days, including one in a dead birch tree at Westchester Lagoon (singing its head off just above a mixed quartet of yellowlegs) and another laying claim to territory near Ava's house.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

NORTHERN SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor*) – One along the telephone wires on our way back into town from the Teller road was a nice find. It shifted positions a few times, then vanished off in the direction of the giant dredge on the horizon.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GRAY JAY (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – An adult with a couple of all gray youngsters made a noisy entrance at Granite Creek Campground. This species is colloquially known as "camp robber" -- with good reason!

STELLER'S JAY (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – Roger spotted one flash across a cliff face during our Kenai Fjords boat trip, but it took until the next day for the rest of us to catch up with one. Fortunately, one on a quiet back road in the Bear Lake subdivision proved obliging, posing for long minutes just above eye level. The subspecies in Alaska -- stelleri -- lacks the bold white markings of subspecies further south.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Small numbers around Anchorage and Seward, and on the drives up and down the Kenai peninsula. We probably got our best looks at Westchester Lagoon, where several -- including some very short-tailed youngsters -- moved through willows along the edge of the pond.

NORTHWESTERN CROW (*Corvus caurinus*) – A few flapped their way across Resurrection and Aialik bays, heading for various islets, but our best views came right beside the road on Lowell Point, where one hunted for tasty tidbits in the grass. This species is considerably smaller than the next.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Common around Nome, Seward and Anchorage, with a couple along the Gaswell road in Barrow.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – A handful trundled around the short grass tundra on Mile 34 Ridge northwest of Nome, gathering insects for their youngsters. We saw at least one disappear under a rock -- presumably to feed a brood.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – The most common of the tour's swallows, seen on all but one day -- and we were probably just not looking hard enough that day! We saw a few around nest boxes in Nome, and watched one struggling against the wind in Barrow, where they are regular (though uncommon) breeders. [N]

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Small numbers at Westchester Lagoon (and elsewhere around Anchorage), but our best views came at Ava's, when we found a pair nesting near where we parked. The male sat on the roof of a shed while the female made repeated visits to a nest box. [N]

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – A few along the Kougarok road, with others zipping back and forth over Hastings Creek (seen during our search for Eastern Yellow Wagtail) and circling over Westchester Lagoon.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Dozens swirled under bridges along the Kougarok and Teller roads, ferrying mouthfuls of mud we had watched them gather from stream sides.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Our best views came at Westchester Lagoon, where we found small family groups (with noisy, recently fledged youngsters) on each of our visits. We saw others at Tern Lake.

CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE (*Poecile rufescens*) – Birds in a couple of locations around Lowell Point showed very well -- particularly the one gathering budworms from trees near where we stopped to look at the Wandering Tattler. We saw another at Ava's feeders.

BOREAL CHICKADEE (*Poecile hudsonicus*) – Nice looks at a few of these hoarse-voiced chickadees at Granite Creek Campground when a little family group came in to check us out.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – We heard the "toy horn" call of this species at Ava's, and spotted one raiding the peanut butter log.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (*Certhia americana*) – Two along the Divide trail clearly had nestlings somewhere close, as we never saw them without a mouthful of bugs! They twitched up nearby spruce trees, not far from our showy Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

PACIFIC WREN (*Troglodytes pacificus*) – Stunningly close views of one little bird chortling in a spruce tree right beside us at the Bear Lake salmon weir. The subspecies here is the nominate "pacificus".

Cinclidae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – Our best looks -- by far -- came under the Indian Creek highway bridge, where we found a trio of newly-fledged youngsters perched precariously on stones in the river. One adult busily provisioned them while the second gathered mouthfuls of sodden leaves from the stream to build (or repair) a nest. We saw another adult on the salmon weir at Bear Lake.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) – Several on Lowell Point gave us great views as they worked their way lower and lower in spruce trees and alder bushes right next to the road.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – One flicked through a spruce tree along the Divide Trail, flipping its wings and occasionally giving us a peek at its colorful crown as it sang and foraged. We heard another singing in Granite Creek Campground -- a big song for such a little bird!

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)

ARCTIC WARBLER (*Phylloscopus borealis*) – Seemingly ZILLIONS along the Kougarak road, with multiple birds singing from every direction virtually everywhere we stopped. We had particularly nice views of several around our picnic breakfast spot, including one singing from a treetop near the vehicles -- a spot he returned to over and over and over again.

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

BLUETHROAT (*Luscinia svecica*) – Wow! This was definitely one of the stars of the show -- a flashy male that wowed us along the Kougarak road. He made us work a bit for it, often choosing a bush juuuuuuust out of view, or flipping into the air for a brief song flight and then dropping into the deepest, densest bit of vegetation. But we got there in the end!

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) – A pair on the Mile 34 Ridge kept us entertained while we made lunch on our last day at Nome, periodically perching up on rocks before dropping back to the ground and disappearing from view. This species prefers to breed in the very shortest of tundra, which always seems to be liberally sprinkled with alpine wildflowers.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*) – Probably the most common of the tour's thrushes -- in numbers anyway -- particularly around Nome. Their lovely spiraling songs were a regular part of the tour soundtrack there.

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*) – One bounced along the far side of the rocky Indian Creek, providing additional entertainment as we enjoyed the dipper family. We had another with the mixed flock at Lowell Point, and heard some singing from the spruce-clad islets we passed on our Kenai Fjords boat trip.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Common throughout, including some on the tundra where we searched for Bristle-thighed Curlew; it's always a bit weird to see our familiar "suburban birds" in such unfamiliar surroundings.

VARIED THRUSH (*Ixoreus naevius*) – A male showed nicely as it sang from the top of a spruce at Turnagain Pass while Doug and I made lunch, and another cooperated (eventually) in a grassy side yard in the Bear Lake subdivision. We had others along the Divide trail, but they proved exceptionally flighty.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Regular in small numbers around Anchorage. I remember when these were "hotline birds", chased after by those working on their state lists! [H]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

EASTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla tshutschensis*) – Our first were a couple of flybys that coursed back and forth across a side road near the coast in Nome, seen as we enjoyed our first Red-throated Loons. Fortunately, for those who never could quite catch up with them, we had much better looks at another bird at Hastings Creek. It paraded around on some open ground near the edge of the gully for a bit before flitting up to the tops of several willows in succession for some singing.

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – One strode around on the roadside near the Cape Nome quarry, searching for insects, and we saw others in short grass tundra along the Kougarak road and on Mile 34 Ridge.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

LAPLAND LONGSPUR (*Calcarius lapponicus*) – Common around Nome and Barrow, with many seen well. We had particularly nice looks at several anxious pairs as we walked out to the beach along the Council road (making us wary about where we stepped), and a few on the climb up the Bristle-thighed Curlew Hill gave us a good excuse for stopping and catching our breath.

SNOW BUNTING (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) – Our first was one some of us spotted flying alongside the van on the Mile 34 Ridge west of Nome; it kept pace for a bit -- only a foot or so above the tundra -- then disappeared over a ridge. Fortunately for those who missed that first one, they proved almost ridiculously common around Nome, where they were ubiquitous. The pair ferrying endless mouthfuls to the nestlings in a pipe protruding from a shed next to our hotel's parking lot were certainly easy to see!

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Dozens shouted challenges from the willow scrub along the Kougarak road (where we saw one perched up near our picnic breakfast spot) and Teller road, and we heard another near Ava's place.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Seen or heard on most days (though missing in Barrow), with especially nice views of four harried adults gleaning insects in the alders along one stretch of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail on our last afternoon. We could hear lots of

cheeping babies in there somewhere!

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Common around Nome, including one very bright male singing from the top of a willow beyond where our Bluethroat kept appearing. We saw others at Westchester Lagoon, and heard more at Ava's.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – A few along the Kougarak road, principally in areas with taller willows. The boldly black-and-white males look considerably different than they do in their soft golden-brown winter plumage!

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE) (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – A few around the loop at Granite Creek Campground, and a few more along the Divide trail. This is another example of the "eastern" birds that wind up in western Alaska.

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga townsendi*) – Fabulous views of a gorgeous male along the road through the Granite Creek Campground -- at eye level in trees right beside us! We saw and heard others around Seward.

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*) – We heard more than we saw on this half of the tour, but did get nice looks at a male at Granite Creek Campground, in the same general area as our first Townsend's Warbler.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW (*Spizelloides arborea*) – Regular around Nome, with others around our picnic lunch spot at Turnagain Pass. One singing from the top of our bush near our picnic breakfast spot along the Kougarak road allowed us some great scope studies.

FOX SPARROW (SOOTY) (*Passerella iliaca sinuosa*) – Our first was a singing bird near our picnic lunch spot at Turnagain Pass, but our best views came at Ava's, where one hopped around on the ground near the foot of the ramp, gleaning tidbits that had fallen from the feeders over its head.

FOX SPARROW (RED) (*Passerella iliaca zaboria*) – Especially nice views of one singing lustily from atop a scrawny tree along the Kougarak road, with dozens of others seen or heard along that and the Teller road; we also had one along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail on our last afternoon. This "red" form is rufous on the upperparts and tail, with a grayer head.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED) (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*) – A few along the road through Granite Creek Campground, with others at Westchester Lagoon. The subspecies found in much of Alaska is *hyemalis*.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – Common across much of our tour route (particularly around Nome), though missing from the North Slope around Barrow. Their sweet song was a regular part of the tour's soundtrack. The subspecies found here is *gambelii*, which has pale lores.

GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) – Very common along the Kougarak road, with others on the Mile 34 Ridge and at our picnic spot in Turnagain Pass. The black and gold head patterns of this species help to determine its social position in wintering flocks.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Most common in the tundra of Nome and Barrow, though we did hear one singing at Turnagain Pass too. There appeared to be plenty on territory along the Council road; they were singing from nearly every bit of driftwood poking up along the way!

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – On our tour route, we find this species only on the Kenai peninsula, particularly around Seward. This year, we had great views of a couple at Ava's, where they hopped around on the ramp leading up to the house, plus another bouncing along the rocky shore of one of the little islets we drifted past on our boat trip. The subspecies here -- *kenaiensis* -- is very large and dark.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*) – Especially nice views of one singing from the reeds right below the boardwalk at Westchester Lagoon, with another at Tern Lake. This species tends to occur in wet meadows or areas around wetlands.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RUSTY BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus carolinus*) – At least three -- a pair, and a single male -- flashed through taller willows near Pilgrim Creek and landed in nearby trees, allowing good scope views. This species is in free fall in Alaska, and has become pretty tough to find.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

PINE GROSBEAK (*Pinicola enucleator*) – Another species seen very well at Ava's feeders, where several pairs -- and some fledged youngsters -- made regular visits to the seed tray. This is a holarctic species, found in a narrow latitudinal band in boreal forests right around the globe.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – Our first visit to Ava's netted us a couple of yellowish females/youngsters, and our return a few days later added a handsome adult male -- part of a family group of 5-6. We got some great looks at their distinctively crossed beaks as they perched in trees beside the road.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL (*Loxia leucoptera*) – One in the Bear Lake subdivision played hard to get, showing well for some in Doug's van before disappearing into the forest. Fortunately, we found some more cooperative birds at Divide trail, after enjoying our American Three-toed Woodpecker nest; these nibbled the seeds out of spruce cones, showing us their beaks in action.

COMMON REDPOLL (*Acanthis flammea*) – Common around Nome, with scattered others around our picnic lunch spot in Turnagain Pass and in Barrow. This species is smaller and darker than the next, with a streaked rump.

HOARY REDPOLL (*Acanthis hornemanni*) – Most common around Barrow, where they vastly outnumbered the previous species. The very pale plumage was pretty easy to spot -- as was the strong pink blush on the heads and chests of the males. The unstreaked rumps were a bit more of a challenge!

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – Hordes around Ava's feeders allowed us to study them from just about every conceivable angle on each of our visits there.

MAMMALS

SNOWSHOE HARE (*Lepus americanus*) – Two hopped back and forth across the quiet road at the back corner of the Bear Lake subdivision, their white tails flashing. Those back legs were certainly long and white -- with big feet!

ALASKAN HARE (*Lepus othus*) – One scuttled along the side of the Council road, disappearing into the willows as our vehicles approached.

ARCTIC GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus parryii*) – Regular around Nome -- including a few doing their best meerkat impressions as they stood on their back legs and peered around -- with another seen scuttling across the tundra in Barrow.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – A few at scattered locations along the Kenai peninsula, including Granite Creek Campground, the Bear Lake subdivision and Tern Lake. We heard their distinctive churring alarm call in various places too!

BEAVER (*Castor canadensis*) – Joe spotted one swimming along the back edge of the main pond at Westchester Lagoon, as he made his way back to the vans on our last afternoon.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – One paddled along the edge of a roadside pond en route to Seward, seen by some after we stopped to get a better look at the Trumpeter Swans. Unfortunately, it stayed mostly under the overhanging branches, and disappeared with a flip before most of the group found

it.

- DALL'S PORPOISE** (*Phocoenoides dalli*) – A group of these small cetaceans passed our Kenai Fjords boat, showing in brief glimpses of sleek black and white bodies, and little rooster tails of spray as we headed south on Resurrection Bay.
- GRAY WHALE** (*Eschrichtius robustus*) – One surfaced several times offshore of the Council road, showing its low, stubby dorsal fin and knobby back -- but never its flukes.
- HUMPBACK WHALE** (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – A lunge-feeding female with a calf made for a pretty spectacular start to our Seward boat trip. The technique is an effective way to capture large numbers of small prey -- after herding them up to the surface, where they can't get away.
- RED FOX** (*Vulpes vulpes*) – One trotted out of the bushes, spotted us and shot off down the Kougarok road in front of the van for a short distance as we headed north towards Coffee Dome.
- SEA OTTER** (*Enhydra lutris*) – Plenty of these adorable mustelids floated in the Resurrection and Aialik bays, including one big raft of nearly 20 animals on the latter. We didn't see any pups this year.
- TELLER'S SEA LION** (*Eumetopias jubatus*) – Good numbers at a few haulouts on the Chiswell Islands, including some an impressive distance above the water. One of the big males was missing an enormous patch of fur, which looked quite painful; our captain told us the injury had first been reported more than a year ago!
- HARBOR SEAL** (*Phoca vitulina*) – A few little "bowling ball" faces floated just offshore at Beluga Point, but we got our best looks near the Aialik glacier, where scores of them rested on floating icebergs -- or tried their best to haul themselves up to join the ones already there!
- BEARDED SEAL** (*Erignathus barbatus*) – One on the ice off Barrow looked to be this species; the big, blocky head helps to identify it. There were surprisingly few seals seen up north this year.
- MOOSE** (*Alces alces*) – A mama with two gangly calves retreated into the willows along the Council road shortly after we spotted them; it was a bit unsettling how effectively such a huge animal could disappear into such little bushes! We saw another single animal along the Teller road, and still another "hide in plain sight" expert (right where we'd looked for Spruce Grouse a few days earlier) in the Granite Creek Campground on our way back from Seward.
- MOUNTAIN GOAT** (*Oreamnos americanus*) – Two females with their small kids rested among the bushes on a sheer slope edging Resurrection Bay (and seen from our boat). It's hard to imagine how those little ones got there!
- MUSKOX** (*Ovibos moschatus*) – Our best looks came east of Nome, when we found a big herd in the middle of the Council road. We sat and watched as they wandered back and forth -- until an impatient driver in a pickup truck barreled through the lot of them and sent them stampeding away. We saw other, more distant animals on a hillside along the Kougarok road.
- DALL'S SHEEP** (*Ovis dalli*) – One rested atop a ridge on the steep slope overlooking the Seward Highway, seen from one of the many convenient pullouts along the road. Without the scope, it sure didn't look like much!

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 159 bird taxa and 18 mammal taxa