

Trip Report — Alaska: The Great Land II 2024

June 8, 2024 to June 24, 2024

Guided by Micah Riegner & Sam Wilson



Our group photo at Hatcher Pass. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

This tour combines the best of Alaska springtime birding: the majestic Kenai Fjords, the spruce and poplar forests of Anchorage, the wild rolling hills of Nome, the frozen seas of Utqiagvik and alcid cliffs of Saint Paul Island. Sam and I had a darn good run of this tour up until the very end when we encountered some logistical challenges when it came to leaving Saint Paul Island. Our departing flight continued to cancel and, after

an additional four days of being stranded, we were finally able to get everyone off the island, on their way home.

Now to the birding highlights, of which there were many! Around Anchorage we saw the very close Spruce Grouse that came out to peck around our feet at Kinkaid Park, several White-winged Crossbills at Hillside Park, and both Surfbird and Hudsonian Godwit at Westchester Lagoon. We had rough seas for our Seward boat day and couldn't get out of Resurrection Bay, but we managed to see Horned and Tufted Puffins, several Marbled Murrelets, Black Oystercatchers, Orcas, Humpback Whales, Sea Otters and several Mountain Goats with kids clinging to the steep cliffs. Birding the roads around Seward we saw Pacific Wren, Varied Thrush, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Sooty Fox Sparrow, Red Crossbills and Pine Grosbeak. We picked up American Dipper at the Willowah Salmon Platform on our way back to Anchorage and a Great Blue Heron at Potter Marsh. We saw a surprising number of Three-toed Woodpeckers throughout the days around Anchorage and a young Black-backed Woodpecker at the Sockeye Burn near Willow.

Micah and Sam compiled this video that encapsulates some of the many great moments we had on the tour.

We cleaned up on the usual Nome targets, finding a number of Bluethroats, Arctic Warblers, Bar-tailed Godwits, Aleutian Terns, no fewer than 6 Bristle-thighed Curlews over at "Curlew Hill," Gyrfalcon, both Rock and Willow Ptarmigans, White and Eastern Yellow Wagtails, Northern Wheatear, Northern Shrike, fly-by Yellow-billed and Arctic Loons, some very distant Emperor Geese and, my personal favorite, Red Knots on their breeding grounds high on the barren tundra. We also saw Moose, Muskox, Harbor Porpoises, and an up-close Short-tailed Weasel scuttling over a rocky outcropping. In Utqiagvik, the eiders put on a good show, especially Steller's, and there was a steady stream of Asian vagrants to keep us busy. For instance, on our first day we saw a breeding plumage Curlew Sandpiper, Common Ringed Plover, several Red-necked Stints, and a Temminck's Stint in full flight display. Seeing Polar Bears from the Nunavak Road and out at Point Barrow was a particular high point for me, given that I went three years in a row without seeing any!



This pair of Steller's Eiders near Utqiagvik was the highlight of the trip for several of us. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

On Saint Paul Island we saw the usual nesting alcids, those being Crested, Parakeet and Least Auklets, Horned and Tufted Puffins, Thick-billed and Common Murres, in addition to close Ancient Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklet, Black-legged and Red-legged Kittiwakes, a Wood Sandpiper, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and, last but certainly not least, Far Eastern Curlew, one of the few records for the island and for North America for that matter! We came across it at Marunich where it was foraging for arthropods in the rocks. It gave us a close fly-by, and we could see its brown rump, distinguishing it from Eurasian Curlew. What a bird!

There are many people who took part in the success of this tour. Sam and I would like to thank Tanya, our boat captain in Seward, Karen in our office for her masterful flight rearranging, and Sulli, Mariah, Luis and Dave for taking great care of us on Saint Paul. We'd like to thank you all for joining us—we can't wait to go birding with you again!



If you like grand vistas, Alaska is the place to go! This was our view during our search for Bristle-thighed Curlews outside of Nome. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

Mammals List

Alaskan Hare (*Lepus othus*) We saw these at various spots along the Kougarok Road outside of Nome.

Collared Pika (*Ochotona collaris*) We walked up Hatcher Pass and saw one off in the distance on a pile of rocks.

Arctic Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus parryii*) Seen around Nome.

Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) The common squirrel around Anchorage and Seward.

Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) We saw one right along the Kougarok Road out of Nome.

Hoary Marmot (*Marmota caligata*) Seen at Hatcher Pass.

Nearctic Brown Lemming (*Lemmus trimucronatus*)

North American Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*) Sam picked one out with his thermal scope near Seward.

Orca (*Orcinus orca*) We saw a pod near the mouth of Resurrection Bay during our boat trip out of Seward. There was one male with several females.

Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) Regular around Point Nome.

Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) We watched one lunge feeding not far from Seward during our boat trip.

Gray Whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) These were the whales we saw from Saint Paul on multiple occasions.

Arctic Fox (*Vulpes lagopus*) Abundant on Saint Paul. Also seen from the Nunavak Road outside of Utqiagvik.

Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*) After four years of visiting Utqiagvik, I finally saw my first Polar Bears! We saw one from the Nunavak Road, then several more at Point Barrow.

Short-tailed Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*) This was a real treat! We watched one poke around a rocky outcropping along the Teller Road outside of Nome.

Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris*) Seen around Resurrection Bay.

Steller's Sea Lion (*Eupetopias jubatus*) We saw several on our Seward boat trip and on the rocks around Saint Paul.

Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) We saw mothers with pups hauled out on the shoreline around Resurrection Bay.

Northern Fur Seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*) June marks the beginning of the breeding season for the fur seals on Saint Paul Island. We saw several hundred hauled out along the coast.

Moose (*Alces alces*) Seen around Anchorage and Nome.

Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus sibiricus*) Several times we saw the herd on Saint Paul Island. They were brought in by the Russians decades ago.

Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) We saw mothers with kids clinging to the steep cliffs around Resurrection Bay.

Muskox (*Ovibos americanus*) We saw a large herd of these iconic beasts of the tundra along the Kougarok Road, Nome.

Butterfly List

Eversmann's Parnassian (*Parnassius eversmanni*) This gorgeous arctic butterfly was seen outside of Nome.

Arctic White (*Pieris angelika*)

Old World Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*)

Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*)

Nudibranch List

Neat Aeolid (*Cuthonella concinna*) Thanks to David we saw these beautiful nudibranchs in the tide pools on Saint Paul Island.

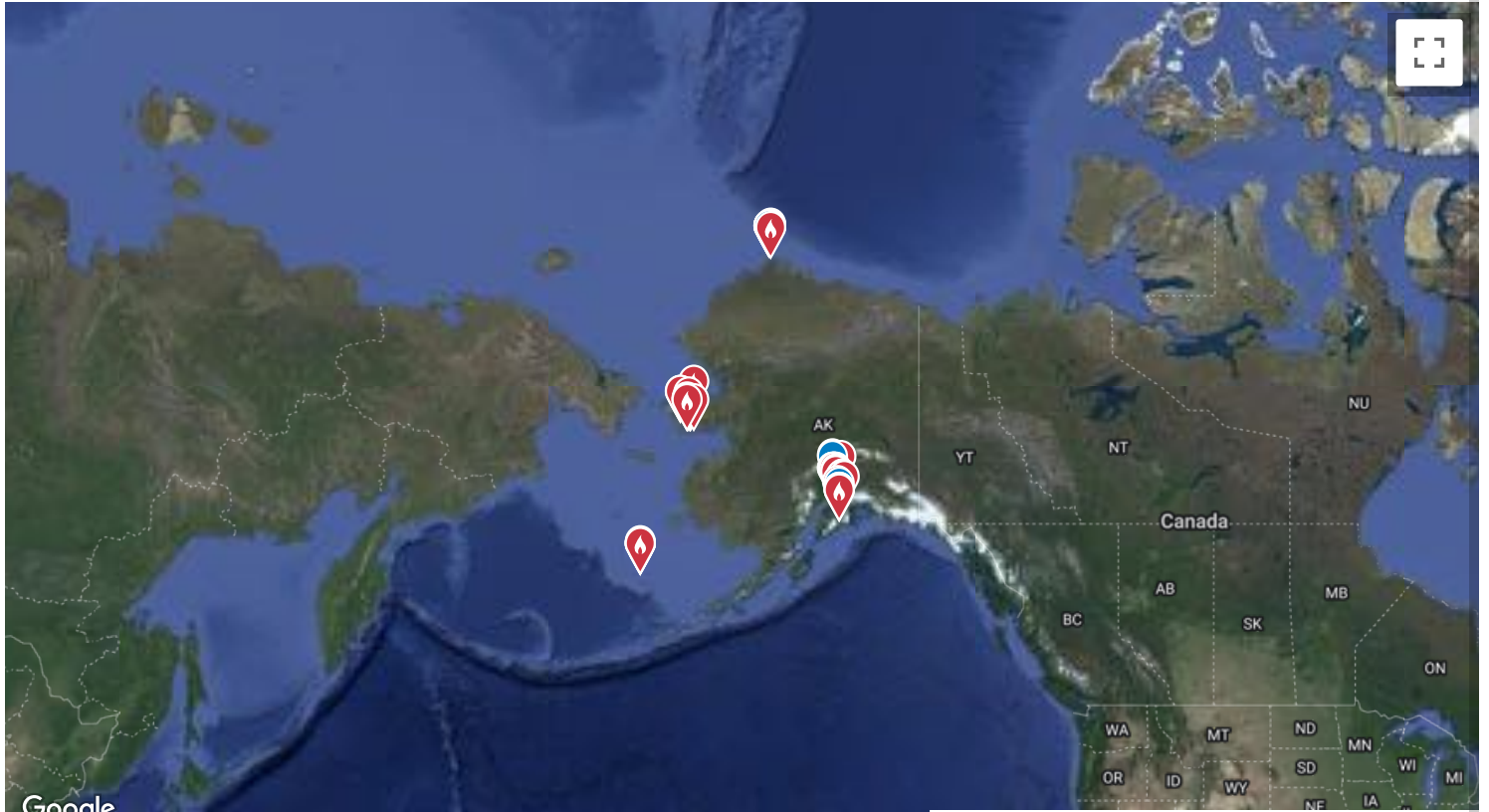
You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/265919>

--Micah Riegner

Field Guides Birding Tours—ALASKA: THE GREAT LAND, 2024 (with Micah Riegner and Sam Wilson)



8 – 26 Jun 2024 (19 days) Link-only



Google

Map data ©2024 Google, INEGI Imagery ©2024 NASA, TerraMetrics

Alaska, United States

Aleutians West Census Area | Anchorage Municipality | Kenai Peninsula Borough | Matanuska-Susitna Borough | Nome Census Area | North Slope Borough

Micah Riegner



For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional media for this trip...

180

Species Observed

55

Checklists

27

Species with Photos











































1
















Species with Audio

LIFERS  9  23  1 






































Species Observed






Show all details

- 4 **Emperor Goose** *Anser canagicus*   1
- 13 **Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens*   1
- 28 **Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*   5
- 111 **Brant** *Branta bernicla*   4
- 2 **Cackling Goose** *Branta hutchinsii*   1
- 17 **Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*   2
- 4 **Trumpeter Swan** *Cygnus buccinator*   2
- 50 **Tundra Swan** *Cygnus columbianus*   5
- 41 **Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata*   3
- 11 **Gadwall** *Mareca strepera*   2
- 40 **American Wigeon** *Mareca americana*   3
- 2 **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*   1
- 33 **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*   8
- 28 **Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca*   11
- 6 **Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria*   1
- 3 **Redhead** *Aythya americana*   1
- 2 **Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*    2
- 10 **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*   3
- 2 **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*    1
- 139 **Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila*   11


































12	Lesser Scaup <i>Aythya affinis</i>	▶  3
4	Steller's Eider <i>Polysticta stelleri</i> 	▶  5  2
8	Spectacled Eider <i>Somateria fischeri</i>	▶  2
30	King Eider <i>Somateria spectabilis</i> 	▶  1  8
85	Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	▶  4
320	Harlequin Duck <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	▶  11
3	Surf Scoter <i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	▶  1
15	White-winged Scoter <i>Melanitta deglandi</i>	▶  3
14	Black Scoter <i>Melanitta americana</i>	▶  4
115	Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	▶  14
16	Common Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	▶  2
2	Barrow's Goldeneye <i>Bucephala islandica</i>	▶  1
28	Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	▶  7
40	Willow Ptarmigan <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	▶  3
2	Rock Ptarmigan <i>Lagopus muta</i> 	▶  1  1
1	Spruce Grouse <i>Canachites canadensis</i> 	▶  1
4	Horned Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	▶  3
10	Red-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	▶  2
3	Rufous Hummingbird <i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	▶  1  1
12	Sandhill Crane <i>Antigone canadensis</i>	▶  5
3	Black Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus bachmani</i>	▶  1
5	American Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	▶  2
9	Pacific Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	▶  5

1	Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> ✓ 📷	▶ 🖼️ 1 📄 1
16	Semipalmated Plover <i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	▶ 📄 12
6	Bristle-thighed Curlew <i>Numenius tahitiensis</i> 📷	▶ 🖼️ 1 📄 1
7	Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	▶ 📄 3
1	Far Eastern Curlew <i>Numenius madagascariensis</i> ✓ 📷	▶ 🖼️ 5 📄 1
2	Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	▶ 📄 1
1	Hudsonian Godwit <i>Limosa haemastica</i>	▶ 📄 1
9	Long-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	▶ 📄 3
2	Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	▶ 📄 2
20	Wilson's Snipe <i>Gallinago delicata</i>	▶ 📄 6
13	Red Phalarope <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	▶ 📄 5
100	Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	▶ 📄 10
1	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶ 📄 1
1	Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i> ✓	▶ 📄 1
5	Greater Yellowlegs <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	▶ 📄 3
5	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	▶ 📄 3
2	Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	▶ 📄 1
2	Surfbird <i>Calidris virgata</i>	▶ 📄 1
1	Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i> ✓ 📷	▶ 🖼️ 1 📄 1
1	Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i> ✓ 📷	▶ 🖼️ 2 📄 1
5	Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i> 📷	▶ 🖼️ 1 📄 4
14	Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	▶ 📄 6
224	Rock Sandpiper <i>Calidris ptilocnemis</i>	▶ 📄 7

3	Baird's Sandpiper <i>Calidris bairdii</i>	▶  2
5	Least Sandpiper <i>Calidris minutilla</i>	▶  4
27	Pectoral Sandpiper <i>Calidris melanotos</i>	▶  5
22	Western Sandpiper <i>Calidris mauri</i>	▶  8
88	Semipalmated Sandpiper <i>Calidris pusilla</i>	▶  16
14	Long-tailed Jaeger <i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	▶  4
19	Parasitic Jaeger <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	▶  8
8	Pomarine Jaeger <i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i> 	▶  1  3
1	Rhinoceros Auklet <i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>	▶  1
70	Tufted Puffin <i>Fratercula cirrhata</i>	▶  9
95	Horned Puffin <i>Fratercula corniculata</i>	▶  11
256	Least Auklet <i>Aethia pusilla</i> 	▶  2  7
48	Crested Auklet <i>Aethia cristatella</i>  	▶  12  5
151	Parakeet Auklet <i>Aethia psittacula</i>	▶  5
34	Marbled Murrelet <i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i> 	▶  1  5
1	Black Guillemot <i>Cephus grylle</i>	▶  1
32	Pigeon Guillemot <i>Cephus columba</i>	▶  5
1530	Thick-billed Murre <i>Uria lomvia</i>	▶  5
194	Common Murre <i>Uria aalge</i>	▶  6
11	Ancient Murrelet <i>Synthliboramphus antiquus</i> 	▶  4  3
2400	Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	▶  11
157	Red-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa brevirostris</i> 	▶  1  5
15	Sabine's Gull <i>Xema sabini</i>	▶  1  2

70	Bonaparte's Gull <i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>	▶  1
136	Short-billed Gull <i>Larus brachyrhynchus</i>	▶  7
117	Glaucous Gull <i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	▶  6
174	Glaucous-winged Gull <i>Larus glaucescens</i>	▶  10
3	Aleutian Tern <i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i>	▶  2
77	Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	▶  13
41	Red-throated Loon <i>Gavia stellata</i>	▶  7
1	Arctic Loon <i>Gavia arctica</i>	▶  1
40	Pacific Loon <i>Gavia pacifica</i>	▶  8
5	Common Loon <i>Gavia immer</i>	▶  3
2	Yellow-billed Loon <i>Gavia adamsii</i>	▶  2
44	Northern Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> 	▶  1  4
83	Red-faced Cormorant <i>Urile urile</i> 	▶  1  7
85	Pelagic Cormorant <i>Urile pelagicus</i> 	▶  1  9
17	Double-crested Cormorant <i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	▶  3
1	Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	▶  1
2	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  2
4	Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	▶  3
3	Northern Harrier <i>Circus hudsonius</i>	▶  3
59	Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	▶  9
2	Rough-legged Hawk <i>Buteo lagopus</i>	▶  1
7	Snowy Owl <i>Bubo scandiacus</i>	▶  4
2	Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>	▶  3  2

5	American Three-toed Woodpecker <i>Picoides dorsalis</i>	▶ 3
1	Black-backed Woodpecker <i>Picoides arcticus</i>	▶ 1
2	Downy Woodpecker <i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	▶ 2
5	Hairy Woodpecker <i>Dryobates villosus</i>	▶ 2
3	Northern Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	▶ 2
4	Gyr Falcon <i>Falco rusticolus</i> Sensitive	▶ 3
1	Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	▶ 1
1	Olive-sided Flycatcher <i>Contopus cooperi</i>	▶ 1
2	Western Wood-Pewee <i>Contopus sordidulus</i>	▶ 1
7	Alder Flycatcher <i>Empidonax alnorum</i>	▶ 2
1	Say's Phoebe <i>Sayornis saya</i>	▶ 1
2	Northern Shrike <i>Lanius borealis</i>	▶ 1
6	Canada Jay <i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>	▶ 2
4	Steller's Jay <i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	▶ 3
9	Black-billed Magpie <i>Pica hudsonia</i>	▶ 4
12	American Crow <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	▶ 2
17	Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	▶ 7
3	Black-capped Chickadee <i>Poecile atricapillus</i>	▶ 3
1	Chestnut-backed Chickadee <i>Poecile rufescens</i>	▶ 1
7	Boreal Chickadee <i>Poecile hudsonicus</i>	▶ 2
8	Bank Swallow <i>Riparia riparia</i>	▶ 4
56	Tree Swallow <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	▶ 9
2	Violet-green Swallow <i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	▶ 2

3	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶  2
13	Arctic Warbler <i>Phylloscopus borealis</i> 	▶  2  4
6	Ruby-crowned Kinglet <i>Corthylio calendula</i>	▶  4
6	Red-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta canadensis</i>	▶  3
1	Brown Creeper <i>Certhia americana</i>	▶  1
14	Pacific Wren <i>Troglodytes pacificus</i>	▶  1  7
1	American Dipper <i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>	▶  1
2	European Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> *	▶  1
8	Varied Thrush <i>Ixoreus naevius</i> 	▶  1  6
37	Gray-cheeked Thrush <i>Catharus minimus</i>	▶  6
3	Swainson's Thrush <i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	▶  2
9	Hermit Thrush <i>Catharus guttatus</i>	▶  3
26	American Robin <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	▶  9
9	Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i>	▶  4
1	Siberian Rubythroat <i>Calliope calliope</i>	▶  1
1	Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i> 	▶  1  1
1	Bohemian Waxwing <i>Bombycilla garrulus</i> 	▶  1
2	Eastern Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>	▶  2
1	White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	▶  1
1	American Pipit <i>Anthus rubescens</i>	▶  1
2	Pine Grosbeak <i>Pinicola enucleator</i> 	▶  1  2
44	Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch <i>Leucosticte tephrocotis</i>	▶  5
21	Common Redpoll <i>Acanthis flammea</i>	▶  7

- 2 **Hoary Redpoll** *Acanthis hornemanni* ▶ 📄 2
- 71 **Red Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* ▶ 📄 2
- 74 **White-winged Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* ▶ 📄 4
- 68 **Pine Siskin** *Spinus pinus* ▶ 📄 5
- 150 **Lapland Longspur** *Calcarius lapponicus* ▶ 📄 14
- 29 **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* ▶ 📄 8
- 11 **American Tree Sparrow** *Spizelloides arborea* ▶ 📄 3
- 25 **Fox Sparrow** *Passerella iliaca* ▶ 📄 8
- 15 **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* ▶ 📄 4
- 29 **White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys* ▶ 📄 11
- 20 **Golden-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia atricapilla* 🗺️ ▶ 📄 6
- 21 **Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandwichensis* ▶ 📄 9
- 4 **Song Sparrow** *Melospiza melodia* ▶ 📄 2
- 3 **Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolni* ▶ 📄 3
- 1 **Rusty Blackbird** *Euphagus carolinus* ▶ 📄 1
- 16 **Northern Waterthrush** *Parkesia noveboracensis* ▶ 📄 5
- 38 **Orange-crowned Warbler** *Leiothlypis celata* ▶ 📄 14
- 19 **Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga petechia* ▶ 📄 5
- 2 **Blackpoll Warbler** *Setophaga striata* ▶ 📄 1
- 12 **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata* ▶ 📄 5
- 12 **Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* ▶ 📄 6

EXOTIC: PROVISIONAL

- 6 **Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia* 🗺️ ▶ 📄 1

HYBRIDS

2 Herring x Glaucous-winged Gull (hybrid) *Larus argentatus x glaucescens*

▶ 🗑️ 1

ADDITIONAL TAXA

5 Greater/Lesser Scaup *Aythya marila/affinis*

▶ 🗑️ 1

1 White-winged/Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta deglandi/stejnegeri*

▶ 🗑️ 1

1 Common/Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus merganser/serrator*

▶ 🗑️ 1

3 Western/Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris mauri/pusilla*

▶ 🗑️ 1

40 Thick-billed/Common Murre *Uria lomvia/aalge*

▶ 🗑️ 1

17 Herring/Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus argentatus/glaucescens*

▶ 🗑️ 2

2 loon sp. *Gavia sp.*

▶ 🗑️ 1

21 Common/Hoary Redpoll *Acanthis flammea/hornemanni*

▶ 🗑️ 5