

# Trip Report — No Place Like Nome 2025

June 23-30, 2025 with Chris Benesh



One of the most iconic and sought after species around Nome is the Bluethroat. They were elusive for much of the tour, but in the end, showed really well for us. Photo by Chris Benesh.

Our No Place Like Nome tour got off to a good start with an on-time flight to Nome, arriving in beautiful summer weather. On the way to the hotel from the airport we had wonderful views of a herd of Muskox right in town at Dry Creek. After taking care of necessities, we headed off after dinner for some birding along the Council Road. We saw a Minke Whale breach and then resurface a few times.

The first full day began with a drive out the Kougarok Road to Mile 27. On the way we had some great birds, including lots of Arctic Warblers, a Willow Ptarmigan family, a Northern Shrike, a Merlin, a family of Golden Eagles, and a Gyrfalcon. We had several furtive Moose as well. The discovery of a Red

Fox den was another highlight of the morning. In the afternoon we headed out the Council Road again and saw some Harbor Porpoises. Loons featured well, with all but Arctic appearing. The Yellow-billed was close and on the water for memorable views. Also nearby was a young Black-headed Gull.



The other "most desired species" is the Bristle-thighed Curlew. This rare species showed well for us at its traditional site on Curlew Hill across from Coffee Dome. Photo by Chris Benesh.

The next day featured a run out the Kougark Road to Mile 72.5, followed by a hike up curlew hill across from Coffee Dome. The weather was beautiful and wildflowers were really showing well as we hiked up the hill. A Rough-legged Hawk flew past us as we started off on the hike. We found a few ptarmigan and began seeing Whimbrel. We also heard a displaying Bristle-thighed Curlew and spotted one flying in the distance. We began a slow trek in that direction, stopping to enjoy American Golden-Plovers and Western Sandpipers (with chicks). After some searching, a lovely Bristle-thighed Curlew appeared in front of us and allowed us to spend the next 30 minutes enjoying its company. What a bird! A lone Horned Lark was another



unexpected treat on the walk. On our way back to Nome we stopped at the Mile 64 Lake where we found our only Eastern Yellow-Wagtails, two birds focused in aerial pursuit of one another. There was also a Red-necked Grebe, and two species of geese. We also had a second Merlin on the drive back.



The group pausing to celebrate our marvelous encounter with the Bristle-thighed Curlew with the Kigluaik Mountains in the background. Photo by Chris Benesh.

The next day we headed out the Council Road in the morning for some more seawatching. At the Fort Davis Wayside we finally connected with some Aleutian Terns, providing great views for us there. Further along we had some Tundra Swans. We did spot some scoters offshore and carefully scrutinized them. Alas, all of the White-winged types were indeed White-winged Scoters. There was a Surf Scoter seen as well. More scanning revealed quick views of a couple of Black Guillemots and Parakeet Auklets. Some beautiful Harlequin Ducks were hanging out at Cape Nome. During our picnic at the train to nowhere we had a flyover Osprey. Between there and Solomon was a flock of 12 Northern Shovelers, a large concentration for the

area. We continued on to Council (well, at least near Council). The transition to spruce forest was interesting. We added Blackpoll and Yellow-rumped Warblers here. On our way home we saw a Black Turnstone at the Safety Sound Bridge.

The following morning we decided to look for the White Wagtail hanging out near the airport. After a bit of searching, we spotted it and had some terrific studies of this scarce breeder. There was also a Least Sandpiper with chicks. We then headed off for the start of the Teller Road. Here we had our first Lesser Yellowlegs and a Rusty Blackbird. Further out on the Teller was a pair of nesting Rough-legged Hawks. Perhaps the highlight of the morning was a pair of territorial Bar-tailed Godwits that showed well for us. The afternoon was spent back in the Nome area. A late visit to the Nome River mouth was good for studying the two species of terns. The bits of tundra just east of the river mouth were great for Pacific Golden-Plover, with 8 seen in total.



Aleutian Terns are a species in decline and they have become trickier to nail down at times. We got our first really great views at the Fort Davis Wayside near the Nome River Mouth. Photo by Chris Benesh.

The next day we headed farther out the Teller Road and a stop at the Penny River was great for American Dipper. Then we encountered some highly territorial Whimbrel along the road and some discovered that they had some young chicks with them that they were being highly protective of. Also here was a male Bar-tailed Godwit. On the Mile 34 Ridge we had a couple of Rock Ptarmigan and big families of Willow Ptarmigan. The latter were a theme in a few spots on the Teller Road. At the Mile 37 side road we had a responsive American Pipit in the fog. Driving back toward town we flushed a big Gyrfalcon right off of the side of the road, but which quickly disappeared in the dense fog. That afternoon featured more seawatching. We had a distant Pomarine Jaeger and a few very distant Horned Puffins in the mix.



Bill Byers's evocative image of a Long-tailed Jaeger chasing Black-legged Kittiwakes has a painting-like quality. We saw three species of jaeger in total with Long-tailed being the most common.

Our last day started with another Lesser Yellowlegs as we were leaving town. We were headed to the Kougarok Road one last time to track down Bluethroat. Thankfully, our few stops finally gave us the great views we had



been hoping for. This late in the season this is a tough species to see well. We scoped a pair of distant Yellow-billed Loons at Salmon Lake (but no sign of Arctic Loons). We stopped to watch the nesting Golden Eagles for a bit and then went to check on the Gyrfalcon and discovered her feeding a chick at the nest (that most suspected did not exist). Her mate joined her on top of the ridge. It was great to see that they were still breeding at this well known site.



Nome is also home to some interesting mammals, and perhaps none more so than the Muskox. We saw several different herds of them during our explorations. Photo by Chris Benesh.

### **Mammals seen on the tour:**

Mammals seen on the tour:

Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*)

Arctic Ground Squirrel (*Urocitellus parryii*)

Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*)

Northern Red-back Vole (*Clethrionomys rutilus*)

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)

Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

Spotted Seal (*Phoca largha*)

Moose (*Alces alces*)

Muskox (*Ovibos moschatus*)

This tour was created by Tom Johnson and his were some really big shoes to fill. It was a treat to share this magical spot with all of you. Our cohesive group made this an easy trip to guide and the mostly favorable weather was most welcome. Thanks to all of you for joining me!

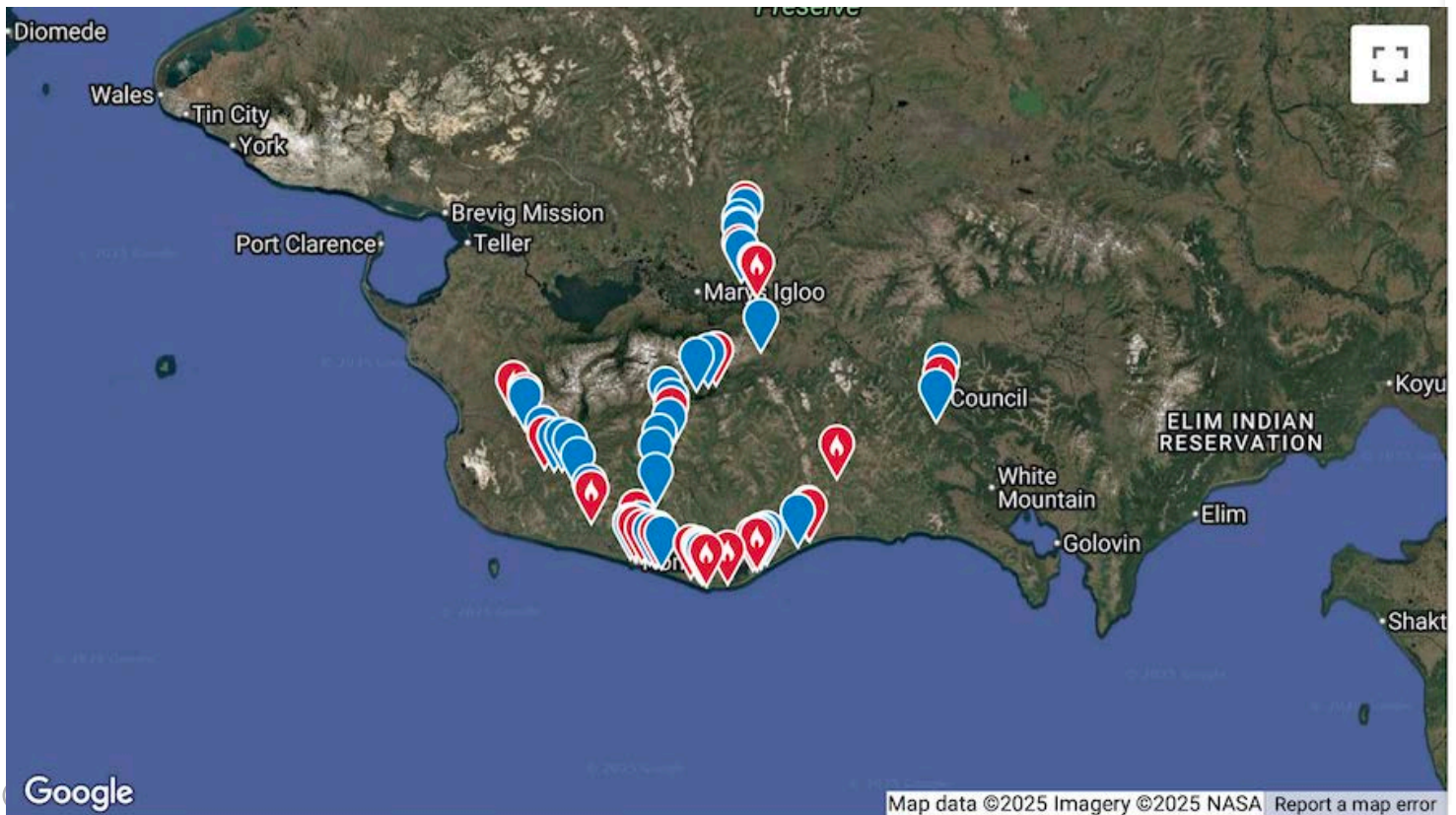
You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/390140>

Chris

## Field Guides Birding Tours -- NO PLACE LIKE NOME 2025 (with guide Chris Benesh)



23 – 30 Jun 2025 (8 days) Link-only



 Nome Census Area, Alaska, United States

 Chris Benesh, Field Guides Birding Tours, fgi Triplists





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

<https://fieldguides.com/triplists/nom25/>

For information on future departures of this Field Guides itinerary, visit:

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 Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)  
 Spotted Seal (*Phoca largha*)  
 Moose (*Alces alces*)  
 Muskox (*Ovibos moschatus*)

DATA FOR: **Group (all people)** ▾

 **90**

Species Observed

 **78**

Checklists

 **5**

Species with Photos

## Species Observed

[Show all details](#)

9 **Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*

▶  2

35 **Brant** *Branta bernicla*























▶  4






















5 **Cackling Goose** *Branta hutchinsii*

▶  3






















1 **Tundra Swan** *Cygnus columbianus*






















▶  1







12	<b>Northern Shoveler</b>	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	▶  1
9	<b>American Wigeon</b>	<i>Mareca americana</i>	▶  3
35	<b>Northern Pintail</b>	<i>Anas acuta</i>	▶  7
8	<b>Green-winged Teal</b>	<i>Anas crecca</i>	▶  5
79	<b>Greater Scaup</b>	<i>Aythya marila</i>	▶  9
69	<b>Common Eider</b>	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	▶  8
17	<b>Harlequin Duck</b>	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	▶  3
4	<b>Surf Scoter</b>	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	▶  2
19	<b>White-winged Scoter</b>	<i>Melanitta deglandi</i>	▶  2
17	<b>Black Scoter</b>	<i>Melanitta americana</i>	▶  3
49	<b>Long-tailed Duck</b>	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	▶  9
1	<b>Common Merganser</b>	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	▶  1
40	<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b>	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	▶  13
43	<b>Willow Ptarmigan</b>	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	▶  7
3	<b>Rock Ptarmigan</b>	<i>Lagopus muta</i>	▶  1  2
9	<b>Sandhill Crane</b>	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>	▶  2
8	<b>American Golden-Plover</b>	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	▶  3
33	<b>Pacific Golden-Plover</b>	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	▶  4
7	<b>Semipalmated Plover</b>	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	▶  6
1	<b>Bristle-thighed Curlew</b>	<i>Numenius tahitiensis</i>	▶  1  1

19	<b>Whimbrel</b>	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	▶  8
3	<b>Bar-tailed Godwit</b>	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	▶  2
22	<b>Wilson's Snipe</b>	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>	▶  13
38	<b>Red-necked Phalarope</b>	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	▶  8
3	<b>Spotted Sandpiper</b>	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  3
2	<b>Lesser Yellowlegs</b>	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	▶  2
5	<b>Black Turnstone</b>	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>	▶  2
11	<b>Least Sandpiper</b>	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	▶  8
27	<b>Western Sandpiper</b>	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	▶  4
22	<b>Semipalmated Sandpiper</b>	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	▶  6
49	<b>Long-tailed Jaeger</b>	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	▶  12
4	<b>Parasitic Jaeger</b>	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	▶  3
1	<b>Pomarine Jaeger</b>	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	▶  1
3	<b>Horned Puffin</b>	<i>Fratercula corniculata</i>	▶  2
2	<b>Parakeet Auklet</b>	<i>Aethia psittacula</i>	▶  1
2	<b>Black Guillemot</b>	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	▶  1
208	<b>Common Murre</b>	<i>Uria aalge</i>	▶  8
1340	<b>Black-legged Kittiwake</b>	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	▶  21
1	<b>Black-headed Gull</b>	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	▶  2  1
93	<b>Short-billed Gull</b>	<i>Larus brachyrhynchus</i>	▶  19






83	<b>Glaucous Gull</b>	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	▶  21
1	<b>Iceland Gull</b>	<i>Larus glaucoides</i>	▶  6  1
22	<b>Aleutian Tern</b>	<i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i>	▶  2
91	<b>Arctic Tern</b>	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	▶  18
2	<b>Red-necked Grebe</b>	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	▶  2
71	<b>Red-throated Loon</b>	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	▶  22
27	<b>Pacific Loon</b>	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>	▶  10
4	<b>Common Loon</b>	<i>Gavia immer</i>	▶  2
3	<b>Yellow-billed Loon</b>	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	▶  2
7	<b>Pelagic Cormorant</b>	<i>Urile pelagicus</i>	▶  4
1	<b>Osprey</b>	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  1
4	<b>Golden Eagle</b>	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	▶  2
4	<b>Rough-legged Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	▶  3
7	<b>Short-eared Owl</b>	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	▶  6
2	<b>Merlin</b>	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	▶  2
5	<b>Gyrfalcon</b>	<i>Falco rusticolus</i> Sensitive	▶  3
1	<b>Northern Shrike</b>	<i>Lanius borealis</i>	▶  1
83	<b>Common Raven</b>	<i>Corvus corax</i>	▶  9
1	<b>Horned Lark</b>	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Bank Swallow</b>	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	▶  1

11	<b>Tree Swallow</b>	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	▶  6
35	<b>Cliff Swallow</b>	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	▶  5
30	<b>Arctic Warbler</b>	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	▶  8
1	<b>American Dipper</b>	<i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>	▶  1
3	<b>Varied Thrush</b>	<i>Ixoreus naevius</i>	▶  3
29	<b>Gray-cheeked Thrush</b>	<i>Catharus minimus</i>	▶  15
20	<b>American Robin</b>	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	▶  15
5	<b>Bluethroat</b>	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	▶  3
2	<b>Northern Wheatear</b>	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	▶  1  1
3	<b>Eastern Yellow Wagtail</b>	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>	▶  2
1	<b>White Wagtail</b>	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	▶  1
1	<b>American Pipit</b>	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	▶  1
99	<b>Redpoll</b>	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	▶  31
32	<b>Lapland Longspur</b>	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	▶  10
6	<b>American Tree Sparrow</b>	<i>Spizelloides arborea</i>	▶  6
28	<b>Fox Sparrow</b>	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>	▶  21
21	<b>White-crowned Sparrow</b>	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	▶  14
17	<b>Golden-crowned Sparrow</b>	<i>Zonotrichia atricapilla</i>	▶  9
24	<b>Savannah Sparrow</b>	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	▶  10
6	<b>Rusty Blackbird</b>	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	▶  3

- 24 **Northern Waterthrush** *Parkesia noveboracensis* ▶  19
- 11 **Orange-crowned Warbler** *Leiothlypis celata* ▶  6
- 30 **Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga petechia* ▶  19
- 2 **Blackpoll Warbler** *Setophaga striata* ▶  2
- 1 **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata* ▶  1
- 12 **Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* ▶  10

#### ADDITIONAL TAXA

- 6 White-winged/Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta deglandi/stejnegeri* ▶  1
- 3 peep sp. *Calidris sp. (peep sp.)* ▶  1
- 25 Thick-billed/Common Murre *Uria lomvia/aalge* ▶  2