



USA – ALASKA: VAST BEAUTY – NOME, DENALI, SEWARD

14 – 26 JUNE 2025

By Jacob Roalef



*Our group scored some incredible views of **Aleutian Tern** in Nome this year.*

Overview

This set departure tour of Alaska began in Anchorage, Alaska on the 14th of June 2025 and concluded back in Anchorage on the 26th of June. The tour traveled throughout this gigantic state, using Anchorage as a home base with jaunts to the Kenai Peninsula, the Denali region, and the old gold rush town of Nome. Several outstanding birdwatching sites were visited, including Resurrection Bay, Kincaid Park, Lowell Point, Westchester Lagoon, Potter Marsh, Hatcher Pass, Denali National Park, the Denali Highway, and the many birding sites of Nome.

This tour connected with some fantastic species including true Alaskan specials and global migrants. We enjoyed the opportunity to study and appreciate each species as best we could. Exploring various habitats in this arctic state produced an excellent list in just 13 days. Avian highlights included **Horned** and **Tufted Puffin**, **Short-tailed Shearwater**, **Spruce Grouse**, **Bristle-thighed Curlew**, **Parakeet Auklet**, **Kittlitz's Murrelet**, **Willow Ptarmigan**, **Arctic and Aleutian Terns**, **Long-tailed Jaeger**, **Arctic Warbler**, **Eastern Yellow and White Wagtails**, **Bohemian Waxwing**, **Boreal Chickadee**, **Northern Hawk Owl**, **Gyr Falcon**, **Pacific Wren**, **Surfbird**, and many more.

A total of 155 bird species were found with one additional heard only species, so the total recorded was 156. In addition to the birds, there were amazing mammal highlights including **Black and Grizzly Bear**, **Moose**, **Humpback Whale**, **Sei Whale**, **Orca**, **Sea Otter**, **Steller Sea Lion**, **Muskox**, **Hoary Marmot** and **Mountain Goat**. Full bird and mammal checklists can be found at the end of the report and be sure to check out our eBird Trip Report for more specifics.



Horned Puffin is always a favorite during our time in Seward.

Detailed Report

Day 1, 14th June 2025. Arrival and Anchorage birding

Today was the beginning of what promised to be an incredible journey through Alaska's wild landscapes. With everyone arriving ahead of schedule, we gathered in the afternoon for some bonus birdwatching before dinner. After exchanging greetings and getting to know each other, we set out for Kincaid Park—an excellent spot in Anchorage for our first taste of birding. We headed for the loop trail here and picked up our first species of the trip, including **Orange-crowned Warbler**, **Sooty Fox Sparrow**, **Redpoll**, and **Black-billed Magpie**. On the back half of our hike, we discovered a nesting pair of **American Three-toed Woodpeckers** in a telephone pole just off the path, as well as a small family of **Canada Jays**. Just before we left, we had our first encounter with a **Moose**, close to the trail. A nice way of saying “welcome to Alaska”. After this, we headed for Westchester Lagoons, another fantastic Anchorage Park. It was a gorgeous day and we began to add some water species to our list like **Trumpeter Swan**, **Northern Pintail**, **Northern Shoveler**, and **Red-necked Grebe**. We headed to the nearby Lake Hood to continue our waterfowl efforts and found **Redhead**, **American Wigeon**, **Common Goldeneye**, and **Pacific Loon**. The top highlight, though, had to be an impressive **Barrow's Goldeneye** sporting its massive head and sloping forehead. We still had a little time left before dinner, so we went to Potter Marsh. The views here were simply stunning and showcased the beauty of Alaska. We continued to add species to our list like **Arctic Tern**, **Red-necked Phalarope**, and **Sandhill Crane**. By the time we finished for the day we had tallied an impressive 41 species. What a fantastic start to our Alaskan adventure! We all enjoyed our first dinner together and discussed the plans for the coming days.



This American Three-toed Woodpecker built a nest in a telephone pole (photo Tom Koontz).

Day 2, 15th June 2025. South to Seward and the Kenai Peninsula

After breakfast we headed out to Lake Spenard for another quick scan, since it was located directly behind our lodging. We were able to find a few new species like **Spotted Sandpiper**, **Bonaparte's Gull**, and **Pacific Loon**, plus we enjoyed another view of the impressive male **Barrow's Goldeneye** here. We continued to Westchester Lagoons, this time to scan out over the Knik Arm closer to high tide, in hopes of birds being closer to shore. The tides here significantly affect the water location and proximity to the viewing location. Our scanning turned up some distant **Harlequin Ducks** as well as **Greater Yellowlegs**. By now we needed to begin our scenic drive to Seward along the Turnagain Arm. A quick stop and scan from Beluga Point netted us **Belted Kingfisher** and **Violet-green Swallow** as well as some close views of **Dall's Sheep** along the roadside. One more brief stop at Tern Lake yielded **Ring-necked Duck** and rounded out our drive to Seward. We arrived in town just in time for lunch along Resurrection Bay, so of course we did some birding before and after eating. We added several new species like **Glaucous-winged Gull**, **Marbled Murrelet**, **Pigeon Guillemot**, and **Pelagic Cormorant**. Both a **Sea Otter** and a distant **Humpback Whale** made an appearance as well, to add to our mammal count.

For the remainder of the afternoon our attention was directed toward locating specialty species that inhabit and nest within the temperate rainforest ecosystem of the Kenai Peninsula. First up was a visit to Lowell Point. The almost eerie forest here provided some great scenery, but dark and challenging conditions for spotting birds. We explored the parking area, trail, and roadside here. It was a chilly day, which certainly didn't help, but with patience and persistence we found **Pacific Wren**, **Steller's Jay**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, **Townsend's Warbler**, **Brown Creeper**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, and **Hermit Thrush**. Not a bad haul to get us started in this habitat. Over at Two Lakes Park we managed to add **Varied Thrush** and **American Dipper** to our list, plus we all enjoyed the nice view of the waterfall here. A great cap to a nice day of birding.



*This adorable **Pacific Wren** made a quick appearance for us (photo Tom Koontz).*

Day 3, 16th June 2025. Resurrection Bay pelagic to Northwestern Fjord

Everyone was excited this morning as we prepared for our full day of pelagic birding out of Resurrection Bay. We grabbed coffee and breakfast at a local Starbucks, before making our way to the docks to check in and board our vessel. While in the harbor, we spotted some of the more common species like **Black-legged Kittiwake**, **Arctic Tern**, **Double-crested Cormorant**, **Common Murre**, and **Marbled Murrelet**. As we ventured further towards open waters, we got our first taste of excitement when a few **Horned Puffins** made a flyby of the boat. A pod of **Orcas** was spotted nearby, so our boat veered in that direction, and we were lucky enough to score some excellent views of these amazing animals, before we continued in our pursuit of birds. We made our way through the Harding Gateway and into the Chiswell Island area. Here we managed to score on many highlight species, such as **Horned** and **Tufted Puffins**, **Ancient Murrelet**, **Parakeet Auklet**, **Surf Scoter**, and **Black Oystercatcher**.

A picnic-style lunch was served on board while we observed the striking scenery enroute to the Northwestern Fjord and glacier. As we neared our destination, sizeable fragments of glacial ice passed by, some large enough to support **Harbor Seals**. After viewing the glacier and watching some glacial calving we left the area and shifted our attention to observing a key target species. Fortunately, we were able to see as many as a dozen of the range-restricted **Kittlitz's Murrelets** actively searching for food in the waters of this fjord. We began our journey back to the docks, making a quick stop at Beehive Island where we added **Rhinoceros Auklet** and **Thick-billed Murre** to our list. Our open water journey back to the bay also provided some excitement as a surprise **Short-tailed Shearwater** sat in the water and was spooked by the boat, plus a family of **Dall's Porpoises** played in our wake. By the time we made it back to land, many lifers had been seen, and we were all tired after a long day on the water. We enjoyed a tasty dinner on the waterfront and headed to the hotel to call it a day.



*It was great to see and hear this group of **Parakeet Auklets** from our boat.*

Day 4, 17th June 2025. Seward and flight to Nome

We set out early this morning for some birding before breakfast. The goal was to clean up some temperate rainforest targets, so it was back to the southern end of Seward at Lowell Point. As soon as we stepped outside the echoing sound of **Varied Thrush** greeted us and we were able to get an even clearer look at one, but not by much. It was raining ever so slightly, nevertheless we did our best and managed to add a **Rufous Hummingbird** to our list. Time for breakfast at a local café, then we packed the car and hit the road towards Anchorage. Along the way we made a quick birding stop at the Bear Creek Weir. Here we found a nice family of **American Dippers**, we enjoyed watching them fly in and feed some fledglings. We also managed to find **Golden-crowned Kinglet** and much better views, compared to yesterday, of **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, a specialist of this habitat. Aside from a **Common Loon** sighting, the drive back to Anchorage was uneventful, albeit scenic. We dropped the vehicle off, transferred to the airport, checked our luggage, and ate lunch while waiting to board our mid-afternoon flight.

Upon landing in Nome, Jacob went ahead to fetch the new vehicle and get everything sorted at the hotel. The rest of the group stayed back at the airport and kept their eyes peeled for a special target hanging around here. Luck was on our side as a **White Wagtail** appeared, gave a brief song, and disappeared again. A true highlight of Nome and a great species for the USA. Just outside of the airport we picked up our first few species here, like **Long-tailed Duck**, **Red-necked Phalarope**, and **Western Sandpiper**. Everyone was keen on birding before dinner, so we dropped our luggage off and headed to the Nome River mouth for a quick scan. It was windy, making conditions a bit difficult, but we managed to find some lovely species here like **Pacific Golden-Plover**, **Long-tailed Jaeger**, **Glaucous Gull**, **Red-throated Loon**, and **Redpoll**. Time for a tasty supper at the always reliable Airport Pizza in town before calling it after a long day of travel to Nome.



The striking breeding plumage of Lapland Longspur is tough to beat.

Day 5, 18th June 2025. Nome – Teller Road

Our aim today was to travel as far along Teller Road as time permitted. We started with some breakfast at the polar café and got off to a nice start when a few **Aleutian Terns** and **White-winged Scoters** flew by. Shortly after leaving town we stopped for a **Muskoxen** herd, marking the first such encounter of our tour. During this time out of the vehicle we observed significant bird activity in the area, allowing us to identify several commonly occurring species at this location. Later we would prioritize more elusive and specialized birds. Among the species recorded were **American Yellow**, **Blackpoll**, and **Wilson's Warblers**, as well as **Northern Waterthrush**, **Wilson's Snipe**, and **Grey-cheeked Thrush**. As we covered some miles on Teller Road the habitat shifted slightly and we made stops for several new species like **Red Fox Sparrow**, **Golden-crowned Sparrow**, and the all-important **Arctic Warbler**. A quick scan of a nice rocky outcrop yielded a **Rough-legged Buzzard**, plus a nearby **Merlin** and **Northern Harrier** to round out our raptor list.

Around lunchtime we managed to find a singing **Bluethroat** along the side of the road. This seemed like a great spot to enjoy our picnic lunch and try for better views of **Bluethroat**, so that's exactly what we did. After eating we did a little hiking in the tundra wilderness and went along the ridge at mile marker 37. Luck was on our side and we nearly instantly got onto a **Northern Wheatear**, a fantastic species! We followed it up the ridge and scored some stellar views. In addition to this great find we came across many other highlights which call the tundra home, such as **Snow Bunting**, **American Pipit**, **Lapland Longspur**, **Red Knot**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **American Golden-Plover**, and **Long-tailed Jaeger**. We circled back to the vehicle, did a quick drive through Woolly Lagoon and spotted a **Parasitic Jaeger** standing menacingly on the tundra ground. Time to get back to town for dinner. The drive was long but we spotted many Willow Ptarmigans along the way, to make for a fun time.



This Willow Ptarmigan did a great job blending in with the grasses.

After dinner a few of us wanted to continue our birding efforts. Since the sun never really sets here we could bird as late as we wanted to. A few brave souls headed out for another scan of the Nome River mouth. Our extra efforts proved to be quite fruitful as we bagged fantastic views of **Aleutian Tern**, plus we picked up **Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Vega Gull** for our lists. Now it really was time to head back and rest before another long day of adventure tomorrow.

Day 6, 19th June 2025. Nome – Kougarok Road

Today's mission: Kougarok Road and the trek up Coffee Dome in search of the curlew. We set off early because we had a long journey ahead and we wanted to reach our hiking point while it was still morning. These early hours, however, provided us with so many Short-eared Owls right from the jump! We drove for about an hour then stopped briefly for our packed breakfast. A nice lake about 64 miles (100 kilometers) into the drive provided us with a few new waterfowl species: **Black Scoter**, **Tundra Swan**, and **Cackling Goose**. Not a bad little stop for us, but we had to be brief as there was still some driving left. Finally, we arrived at Coffee Dome around 10:30am, prepped our boots, and hit the "trail", if you can call it that. It was certainly wet and muddy. Walking in the tundra grasslands was comparable to mossy bowling balls, not for the faint of the heart. We noted **Savannah Sparrow**, **Willow Ptarmigan**, **Lapland Longspur**, and our first false alarm with a Hudsonian Whimbrel flying by. During one of our breaks to catch our breath and scan we heard the distinctive call of a **Bristle-thighed Curlew**. Time to strategize and hope for another call. Thankfully, we got another call which helped us get the correct direction. We veered hard to the right and continued our efforts. Eventually we spotted one calling and flying, its buffy rump visible in flight, score!



*Nailing some views of **Bristle-thighed Curlew** made the hike worth it (photo Tom Koontz).*

However, we wanted to see some bristly thighs on the **Bristle-thighed Curlew**. We continued our efforts and, with patience and perseverance, got onto a few individuals in the scope and managed to see this cool field mark, even though it was difficult. With pep in our step from seeing the **Bristle-thighed Curlew** we hiked a little quicker out, but perhaps this was also due to going downhill instead of up! We made it back to the vehicle with wet feet but also the sweet victory of success. Time to begin the long journey back to town. We stopped along the Kuzitrin River to have our picnic lunches and do a quick search. It didn't take long to spot the **Say's Phoebe** that likes to nest in the area, plus there were many **American Cliff Swallows** nesting under the bridge. The mosquitoes began to become a nuisance however, so we ate quickly and continued the long journey back. The scenery was spectacular, and it was made even better with sightings of **Muskox** and **Moose** as we drove. We made it back to the hotel, changed clothes, and headed for our final dinner at our go-to-spot, Airport Pizza. After we ate, some of us went out for a little while longer and found an uncommon **Long-billed Dowitcher** and a rare **Short-tailed Shearwater** drifting in the water close to shore. We managed to get closer and snag a few shots before calling it a night and getting some much-deserved rest.

Day 7, 20th June 2025. Nome – Council Road and back to Anchorage

One final day in Nome, one final road to explore, the Nome-Council Road. We headed off early and enjoyed a few **Short-eared Owls** and **Long-tailed Jaegers** hunting over the tundra. A quick scan from Cape Nome yielded **Common Eider** and **Brant** for our list, but we didn't stay long due to some construction in the area. The Nome-Council Road is surrounded by water for miles on both sides, being the Safety Sound and Bering Sea. We made several stops to scan and scope the water as it was loaded with birds. We found several new species like **Black Turnstone**, **Dunlin**, **Canvasback**, and **Greater White-fronted Goose**, plus hundreds of **Tundra Swans** which are always neat. While scanning through the swans, John spotted a large brown mass on the far side of the water. Further investigation proved it to be a **Grizzly Bear** digging in the ground for roots! What a fantastic sight and even better at a safe distance. A **Moose** swimming in the Bering Sea near the Safety Sound bridge was also a strange mammal highlight for the day. Eventually, we rounded the corner and the road began to head inland, away from the water. We reached the area known as Solomon and it wasn't long before we were enjoying our target here, **Eastern Yellow Wagtail**. Two birds sang and displayed for a while as we soaked in this rare species. However, we couldn't stay too long as we had some ground to cover and get up and over Skookum Pass. The scenery here was impressive, as always, and we did some quick scans of the pass area. There weren't many birds up here, but we did find a pair of **Surfbirds** with some fluffball chicks, plus another **Northern Wheatear**, always a great find. We approached our target area slowly and, as we rounded the corner, there it was, an impressive **Gyr Falcon** perched on the rocks near its nest! What a beast of a bird. It took off as it was right along the road. We located the nest and saw the **Gyr Falcon** chicks, before we moved ahead to a safe distance and enjoyed our packed lunch.

After lunch, we headed back to town to catch our late afternoon flight to Anchorage. Along the way, we had time to do some birdwatching and make a few stops. Our first stop was the Last Train to Nowhere, a well-known tourist attraction, and we found a few **Red-necked Phalaropes** spinning in the water here. A few **Aleutian Terns** perched in the middle of the road were our final highlight, before we made it back into town and our hotel. We used the rest of our time getting ready to travel, organizing our luggage, and heading to the airport. After boarding our flight and

landing in Anchorage, we caught the shuttle and ended the long day of birding and travelling with a late dinner at the hotel.



*This powerful **Gyr Falcon** was watching over its nearby nest.*

Day 8, 21st June 2025. Anchorage to Palmer

Following an intensive time in Nome and a late night getting back to Anchorage, we appreciated a more relaxed morning. We took the opportunity to sleep in, enjoyed breakfast at the hotel, and prepared for the day ahead. We had a less demanding schedule because our only destination today, Palmer, was located about an hour and a half away. We had a few targets left in the Anchorage area so we started the day at Kincaid Park. Our usual loop trail hike produced one of our targets, **Boreal Chickadee**, along with some usual suspects like **American Three-toed Woodpecker**, **Swainson's Thrush**, **Alder Flycatcher**, and **Dark-eyed Junco**. We checked a few more local areas, but our grouse quest came up empty handed, so we headed for lunch in Anchorage. Another quick check of Westchester Lagoon turned up mostly the same species as before, including **Red-necked Grebe**, **Arctic Tern**, and **White-crowned Sparrow**.

The remainder of the afternoon we spent at the Palmer Hay Flats boardwalk trail. It was a lovely day and we enjoyed our time out in this neat natural area. We managed to find a few new species for our trip, like **Western Wood-Pewee**, **Lincoln's Sparrow**, and **Rusty Blackbird**. In addition, we enjoyed **Bald Eagle**, **Redpoll**, and **Blackpoll Warbler**. At the end of the boardwalk we found a rarity in the form of a **Common Yellowthroat**, which added a little extra excitement to our birding here. Time to get to the hotel, check in, unpack, and have dinner in the town of Palmer. After we ate a few of us went out to investigate a new area and eventually found the nesting pole of an **Osprey**, to add one more species to our list before calling it a day.



*It was great to find a **Boreal Chickadee** after missing it earlier (photo Tom Koontz).*

Day 9, 22nd June 2025. Hatcher Pass to Healy

We began our day with a filling breakfast and coffee at a nearby café, before heading out to Hatcher Pass. Arriving at the Gold Mint Trailhead in the late morning, we took some time to stretch and visit the restroom. During our stop we observed several lovely birds, including **White-crowned Sparrow** and **Wilson's Warbler**. Our next destination was Independence Mine, once a gold mining site, where we explored the tundra and cliffs and spotted **Golden-crowned** and **Sooty Fox Sparrows**. Near our van we watched a pair of **Hoary Marmots** darting in and out of their burrows. The pass itself was still closed for the season, so we walked the roadside instead to see if we could turn up anything interesting. It was a difficult uphill hike but we managed to find a **Golden Eagle** soaring along the ridges, as well as **Arctic Ground Squirrel** and **Collared Pika** to add to our mammal list. Sadly, since the road was closed, we couldn't drive up and over the pass like we had hoped. A detour was needed, so we backtracked a bit and found the alternate route to Willow, where we stopped for lunch at a lovely little outdoor spot.

After lunch we still had quite a distance to travel before reaching Healy, so we got back on the road. Our next birdwatching spot was the sockeye burn area - a stretch of recently burned coniferous forest that seemed ideal for woodpeckers and other woodland birds. We explored the roadside thoroughly, searching for birds, and picked up **Hairy Woodpecker** to add to our trip list, plus we found **American Three-toed Woodpecker**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, **Brown Creeper**, **Mrytle Warbler**, **Swainson's Thrush**, and **Alder Flycatcher**. On our way out we snagged **Northern Flicker**, another new species for Alaska for us. We proceeded to Denali viewpoint south, a great spot to take a break and look at the Alaska Range, which contains the famous Mount Denali. Unfortunately, it was a cloudy day as usual and the main mountain wasn't very visible, the view was nevertheless incredible. After another 100 miles (161km) we approached Denali National

Park. A strange, smoky haze covered the entire area. It turned out that there was a wildfire about 30-40 miles (48-80km) north of the park and a recent shift in winds had caused the smoke to blow into the park area. It was unfortunate, but we continued to the bus depot, checked in for our tour tomorrow, and went to the hotel. We ate dinner, hoping that the wind would shift again and clear the smoke out.



Hoary Marmot was one of many mammal highlights of the trip (photo Tom Koontz).

Day 10, 23rd June 2025. Denali National Park

Since our bus into Denali National Park wasn't scheduled until the afternoon, we had some free time in the morning for birdwatching and exploring nearby areas. We began at Otto Lake before breakfast, where we spotted trip-firsts like **Bufflehead** and **Red-tailed Hawk**, along with **Lesser Scaup** and a family of **Moose** across the lake. After finishing our quick survey, we went to Rose's Café to enjoy a delicious breakfast.

We headed into the park towards Savage River. Along the entrance, we scanned great habitat and were rewarded with a close sighting of **Northern Hawk Owl**, a great spot by Mark! We circled back around so that each side of the vehicle could enjoy the **Northern Hawk Owl**, as we couldn't really stop and get out on this section of road. Along the river we parked and hiked around a bit. We could hear the song of a **Smith's Longspur** singing from the other side but never managed to get eyes on it, so it went down as heard only. **Willow Ptarmigan**, **White-crowned Sparrow**, and nesting **Short-billed Gulls** were added to our day list. We made our way back to the main visitor center and spent some time there, learning more about the park. We then headed off to the bus depot to line-up, grab some coffee, eat lunch, and wait for our tour into Denali National Park. The Tundra Wilderness Tour provided an informative overview of the park's natural features, extending to mile-marker 43 (km-63) on the route, where a significant washout is currently

undergoing repairs. Access beyond the Savage River checkpoint is restricted to authorized vehicles only. Throughout the excursion, we observed various habitats and learned about the natural history of Denali. We took in all the incredible scenery on offer inside this expansive national park. Notable sightings included **Dall's Sheep**, **Caribou**, **Moose**, **Arctic Ground Squirrel**, and **Northern Harrier**. During the return trip to the depot a **Willow Ptarmigan** family was observed near the roadside, concluding a productive day within Denali National Park.



*We enjoyed a close encounter with this **Northern Hawk Owl** in Denali (photo Tom Koontz).*

Day 11 24th June 2025. Birding the Denali Highway

We packed up the van early today, driving for half an hour until we reached a charming local café where we enjoyed breakfast. Once satisfied with baked goods and coffee, we got back on the road and started our lengthy drive along the picturesque Denali Highway. First up was a brief stop at a nice, forested area. However, after a short walk and finding **Canada Jay**, the mosquitoes took over and we had to call it and hop back in the vehicle. We continued and made another stop at a roadside lake that hosted **White-winged Scoter**, **Lesser Scaup**, and **Lesser Yellowlegs**. Not long after this we turned a corner and a female **Spruce Grouse** was just sat in the middle of the road. Finally, after so much effort around Anchorage, we added this sneaky grouse species to our list. This **Spruce Grouse** even allowed us to get out and study it as it flew off into the nearby spruce trees. Mile after mile went by, in great habitat for our main target species when, suddenly, we spotted two birds of the right shape flying by us as we drove. A quick stop to be sure and, success, **Bohemian Waxwing** was in the bag! Sadly, they didn't hang around long, and they disappeared almost as quickly as they had magically appeared, but it was sufficient for a nice view. We ventured a little further before stopping to enjoy our lunch at a scenic highpoint, surrounded by tundra, taiga, and stunning mountain ranges.

The weather began to shift in the afternoon, with some rain and dark clouds on the horizon, so birding was a bit sparse. We arrived at our lodge on the Maclaren River around mid-afternoon and were greeted by **Arctic Tern**, **American Cliff Swallow**, and more. We checked in and waited the rain out for a while, relaxing in our cabins. Eventually, the rain subsided for the most part, so we headed out for a little more pre-dinner birding at Tangle Lakes. A gorgeous group of **Harlequin Ducks** were resting on the rocks in the river, in addition to **American Herring Gull**, **American Yellow Warbler**, and **Grey-cheeked Thrush**. A little further down the road we managed to spot a **Great Grey (Northern) Shrike** working the area, a new species for the trip. Loads of **Red-necked Phalaropes** were working hard in the nearby wet areas, and a family of **Trumpeter Swans** were cozy on a muskrat hut. Back to the lodge for dinner and a rest after a lovely day along the Denali Highway.



*It was great to find the stunning **Harlequin Duck** several times this year (photo Tom Koontz).*

Day 12, 25th June 2025. Back to Anchorage

This was our final full day in Alaska together and we had a lot of ground to cover to make it back to Anchorage this evening. We ate a nice breakfast at the lodge before packing our things and finishing the last stretch of the Denali Highway. Another quick check of the Tangle Lakes area produced a **Wandering Tattler** for us, along the rocky edges of the river. Our list of possible species to add to our trip was quite thin, so it was nice to add something this morning. We also enjoyed **Harlequin Duck**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Wilson's Warbler**, and **Alder Flycatcher** this morning. From here it was a long drive to reach Glennallen along Highway 4 from Paxson. This area featured a huge expanse of boreal forest, and we even managed to spot another **Northern Hawk Owl** along the drive. We tried to find a place to get out and observe it, but it had flown off by the time we managed a safe parking area. Just before lunch we stopped at a small wetland area and

found a **Solitary Sandpiper** along with **Bufflehead**, **American Wigeon**, and **Lesser Yellowlegs**. This would be our final addition to our Alaska trip list.

It was already mid-afternoon and the rest of the day, after lunch, consisted of driving back to Anchorage. We made a stop for a scenic view of the Matanuska Glacier, a great place to stretch the legs. A **Varied Thrush** was singing deep in the woods, taunting Tom, since he was still hoping for that nice photo of one. Alas, it would have to come on another trip sometime. We pulled into the hotel, took a little break after a long day of driving, and then met up again for our final dinner together, where we discussed our favorite moments, sightings, and aspects of the tour and our time in Alaska.



Arctic Tern is a common species found nearly daily in Alaska.

Day 13, 26th June 2025. Tour conclusion

This was the final morning of our epic journey through Alaska. The hotel offered breakfast for those with later departure flights home, but some of us had to catch an early flight home. The hotel shuttle service accommodated everyone's schedule. Another adventure in Alaska was completed and everyone voted on their favorite sightings of the trip. The winners this year, in no particular order, were **Northern Hawk Owl**, **Bluethroat**, **Northern Wheatear**, **Tufted Puffin**, and **Grizzly Bear**.



*It was funny to see this **Short-eared Owl** perched on a telephone line.*

Bird List - Following IOC (15.1 month and year of issue)

Birds 'heard only' are marked with (H) after the common name, all other species were seen. Species seen only on the pre-trip day of this trip are marked with (+) after the common name.

The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: CE = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae)	
Brant Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
Cackling Goose	<i>Branta hutchinsii</i>
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
Trumpeter Swan	<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>
Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>
American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>
Redhead	<i>Aythya americana</i>
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>
White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta deglandi</i>
Black Scoter	<i>Melanitta americana</i>
Long-tailed Duck - VU	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
Pheasants & Allies (Phasianidae)	
Willow Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>
Spruce Grouse	<i>Canachites canadensis</i>
Hummingbirds (Trochilidae)	
Rufous Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus rufus</i>
Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)	
Rock Dove (Introduced)	<i>Columba livia</i>
Cranes (Gruidae)	
Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>
Grebes (Podicipedidae)	
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)	
Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Plovers (Charadriidae)	
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
American Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>
Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae)	
Bristle-thighed Curlew	<i>Numenius tahitiensis</i>
Hudsonian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius hudsonicus</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>
Short-billed Dowitcher - VU	<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>
Wilson's Snipe	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>
Solitary Sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>
Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>
Lesser Yellowlegs - VU	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Black Turnstone	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Surfbird	<i>Calidris virgata</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>
Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>
Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae)	
Aleutian Tern - VU	<i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i>
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Black-legged Kittiwake - VU	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>
Short-billed Gull	<i>Larus brachyrhynchus</i>
Vega Gull	<i>Larus vegae</i>
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
American Herring Gull	<i>Larus smithsonianus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>
Skuas (Stercorariidae)	
Long-tailed Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>
Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Auks (Alcidae)	
Rhinoceros Auklet	<i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>
Tufted Puffin	<i>Fratercula cirrhata</i>
Horned Puffin	<i>Fratercula corniculata</i>
Parakeet Auklet	<i>Aethia psittacula</i>
Kittlitz's Murrelet	<i>Brachyramphus brevirostris</i>
Marbled Murrelet - EN	<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>
Pigeon Guillemot	<i>Cephus columba</i>
Thick-billed Murre	<i>Uria lomvia</i>
Common Murre	<i>Uria aalge</i>
Ancient Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus antiquus</i>
Loons (Gaviidae)	
Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
Pacific Loon	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Petrels, Shearwaters, Diving Petrels (Procellariidae)	
Short-tailed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna tenuirostris</i>
Cormorants and Shags (Phalacrocoracidae)	
Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Urile pelagicus</i>
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum auritum</i>
Ospreys (Pandionidae)	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae)	
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>
Owls (Strigidae)	
Northern Hawk-Owl	<i>Surnia ulula</i>
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)	
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>
Woodpeckers (Picidae)	
American Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides dorsalis</i>
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Leuconotopicus villosus</i>
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>
Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae)	
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>
Tyrant Flycatchers (Tyrannidae)	
Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>
Western Wood Pewee	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>
Alder Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax alnorum</i>
Shrikes (Laniidae)	
Northern Shrike	<i>Lanius borealis</i>
Crows, Jays, and Magpies (Corvidae)	
Canada Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>
Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Waxwings (Bombycillidae)	
Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice (Paridae)	
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	<i>Poecile rufescens</i>
Boreal Chickadee	<i>Poecile hudsonicus</i>
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>
Swallows (Hirundinidae)	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>
Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>
American Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>
Leaf Warblers & Allies (Phylloscopidae)	
Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>
Kinglets (Regulidae)	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Corthylio calendula</i>
Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>
Wrens (Troglodytidae)	
Pacific Wren	<i>Troglodytes pacificus</i>
Treecreepers (Certhiidae)	
Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>
Starlings (Sturnidae)	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Thrushes and Allies (Turdidae)	
Varied Thrush	<i>Ixoreus naevius</i>
Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>
Grey-cheeked Thrush	<i>Catharus minimus</i>
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
Chats, Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)	
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Dippers (Cinclidae)	
American Dipper	<i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>
Wagtails and Pipits (Motacillidae)	
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
American Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>
Finches, Euphonias, and Allies (Fringillidae)	
Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>
Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>
Longspurs and Snow Buntings (Calcariidae)	
Lapland Longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>
Smith's Longspur (H)	<i>Calcarius pictus</i>
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>
New World Sparrows (Passerellidae)	
Sooty Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella unalaschensis</i>
Red Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>
American Tree Sparrow	<i>Spizelloides arborea</i>
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>
Golden-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia atricapilla</i>
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>
Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolni</i>
Oropendolas, Orioles, Blackbirds (Icteridae)	
Rusty Blackbird - VU	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>
New World Warblers (Parulidae)	
Northern Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>
Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis celata</i>
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
American Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga aestiva</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Setophaga striata</i>
Myrtle Warbler	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>
Townsend's Warbler	<i>Setophaga townsendi</i>
Wilson's Warbler	<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>
Total Seen	155
Total Heard	1
Total Recorded	156

Mammal List

Common Name	Scientific Name
Rabbits and Hares (Leporidae)	
Snowshoe Hare	<i>Lepus americanus</i>
Alaskan Hare	<i>Lepus othus</i>
Pikas (Ochotonidae)	
Collared Pika	<i>Ochotona collaris</i>
Beavers (Castoridae)	
American Beaver	<i>Castor canadensis</i>
Squirrels and Allies (Sciuridae)	
North American Red Squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
Arctic Ground Squirrel	<i>Urocitellus parryii</i>
Hoary Marmot	<i>Marmota caligata</i>
Rodents (Cricetidae)	
Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>
Dogs (Canidae)	
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
Bears (Ursidae)	
Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>
Eared Seals (Otariidae)	

Common Name	Scientific Name
Steller Sea Lion	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>
Earless Seals (Phocidae)	
Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>
Weasels, Badgers and Allies (Mustelidae)	
Sea Otter - EN	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>
True Deer (Cervidae)	
Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>
Caribou - VU	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>
Cloven-hoofed Mammals (Bovidae)	
Mountain Goat	<i>Oreamnos americanus</i>
Dall's Sheep	<i>Ovis dalli</i>
Muskox	<i>Ovibos moschatus</i>
Rorquals (Balaenopteridae)	
Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
Oceanic Dolphins (Delphinidae)	
Orca - DD	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
Cloven-hoofed Mammals (Bovidae)	
Dall's Porpoise	<i>Phocoenoides dalli</i>
Total seen	22