

Alaska's Northern Passages and Glacier Bay Species List | July 12-19, 2025 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by Bryan Calk with Ofer, Cheryl, Kay, George, Jill, Lloyd, David, Cynthia, Denette, Malcolm, Tim, Candice, Betsy, and John

Our week exploring Alaska's Northern Passages and Glacier Bay was a deep dive into one of the wildest, richest corners of the continent. We cruised through island-studded waters, watched Brown Bears grazing meadows and combing shorelines, and paddled alongside Sea Otters in glassy bays tangled with bull kelp. Glacier Bay delivered rare birds and dramatic scenery. There were Kittlitz's Murrelets near calving glaciers, Tufted Puffins standing sentinel on rocky ledges, and towering cliffs that told a story of shifting ice and uplifted seabeds. Down on the tide line, we found Blue Mussels, squirting clams, Dungeness Crab molts, and tiny sculpins darting between stream trickles, all proof of the incredible productivity pulsing through these inlets.

The scale of the landscape often left us quiet. Massive tidewater glaciers like Lamplugh and Margerie creaked and cracked in the sun, their fractured blue faces glowing above glassy fjords. Icebergs drifted silently past, sculpted into abstract forms, while snow-capped peaks rose behind in sharp contrast to the deep green forested slopes below. Above the water, Mountain Goats appeared like ghosts on sheer rock faces, their precious kids not far away. Throughout the trip, the rhythm of life aboard the ship created space to connect, reflect, and explore. Warm meals, shared binocular views, and quiet moments watching mist move through the trees gave way to thrilling wildlife encounters—Orcas just offshore, Humpbacks bubble-netting, Mink slipping between barnacle-covered rocks. On shore, we followed creek edges through bear trails and listened to the dawn chorus echo through mossy woods. The on-board naturalists and guides brought the region to life with stories, sharp eyes, and an infectious sense of wonder. It was the kind of trip where you learn something every day, whether about the ecosystem, the region's layered history, or your own sense of awe.

BIRDS (65):

During the trip, sixty-five species were recorded of which two were introduced and fourteen that were only observed pre or post-cruise in Sitka or Juneau. Details are included below.

The eBird link below details the 65 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Alaska's Northern Passages and Glacier Bay | July 12-19, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

MAMMALS (15):

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* – Seen throughout, with highlights including a bubble-net feeding pod during the final dinner.

Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* – Hoonah Sound. Early morning sighting while cruising.

Orca (Killer Whale) *Orcinus orca* – Pavlof Harbor. A pod seen midday cruising through the bay.

Pacific White-sided Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens* – Hoonah Sound. Active and surfacing alongside the ship.

Sea Otter *Enhydra lutris* – Glacier Bay, Idaho Inlet, Inian Islands. Frequently seen floating in kelp, often with pups.

North American River Otter *Lontra canadensis* – Listed but unconfirmed; likely seen briefly near shoreline.

American Mink *Neogale vison* – Pavlof Harbor, Inian Islands, Idaho Inlet. Spotted foraging on intertidal rocks.

Coastal Brown Bear *Ursus arctos* – Paradise Flats, Pavlof Harbor, Idaho Inlet. Several individuals including a sow with cubs.

Steller's Sea Lion *Eumetopias jubatus* – Inian Islands. Bachelor groups feeding on salmon; one surfaced just feet from a skiff.

Harbor Seal *Phoca vitulina* – Fox and Shaw Islands and elsewhere. Often lounging on rocks or peeking from kelp beds.

Sitka Black-tailed Deer *Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis* – Hoonah Sound and Idaho Inlet. Grazing in coastal meadows.

Mountain Goat *Oreamnos americanus* – Gloomy Knob area; adults and young seen clinging to rocky cliffs.

Hoary Marmot *Marmota caligata* – Ridge hike at Lamplugh Glacier; one seen lounging on rocks.

Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* – Heard chattering in spruce forests.

Porcupine *Erethizon dorsatum* – Bartlett Cove. Two individuals napping near the visitor center.

OTHER WILDLIFE:

Neomolgus Mite *Neomolgus* spp. – Bright red mites seen darting across glacial silt at Lamplugh Glacier; a resilient microarthropod.

Rockweed Isopod *Pentidotea vosnesenskii* – Found beneath algae along the intertidal; well-camouflaged crustacean adapted to kelp-rich zones.

Pacific Acorn Barnacle *Balanus glandula* – Covering intertidal rocks; a common sessile crustacean in splash zones.

Dungeness Crab *Metacarcinus magister* – Intertidal zone; molts and live crabs seen during tidepooling.

Limpet *Patellogastropoda* spp. – Grazers on rocks in tide zone.

Mottled Sea Star *Evasterias troschelii* – Observed up close during intertidal walk.

Plumose Anemone *Metridium farcimen* – Cauliflower-textured white anemones seen just below surface at low tide.

Christmas Tree Anemone *Utricina crassicornis* – multi-colored red and white anemones seen just below surface at low tide.

Moon Jellyfish *Aurelia aurita* – Transparent and delicate, observed from deck.

Northern Sea Nettle *Chrysaora melanaster* – Spotted in open water, distinguished by reddish bell and long tentacles.

Lion's Mane Jellyfish *Cyanea capillata* – Seen drifting by the ship with long trailing tentacles.

Tidepool Sculpin *Oligocottus* spp. – Paradise Flats and Idaho Inlet. Observed darting in freshwater outflows and tidepools.

Banana Slug *Ariolimax columbianus* – Slowly moving across forest floor.

Old Man's Beard *Usnea* spp. – Lichen hanging from tree branches; indicator of clean air.

PLANTS:

Red Alder *Alnus rubra* – Fast-growing nitrogen fixer seen in disturbed or wet areas.

Sitka Alder *Alnus viridis sinuata* – Common along avalanche paths and moist slopes.

Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis* – Dominant tree in lowland forests.

Western Hemlock *Tsuga heterophylla* – Co-occurs with Sitka Spruce; often forms climax forest.

Beach Rye *Leymus mollis* – High intertidal grass forming boundaries with forest.

Skunk Cabbage *Lysichiton americanus* – Wet areas and edges of muskeg.

Devil's Club *Oplopanax horridus* – Spiny-leaved shrub of moist forest understory.

Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* – Low-growing yellow-flowered plant, especially along damp meadow edges.

Spreading Wood Fern *Dryopteris expansa* – Widespread in shaded forest understory.

Western Lily of the Valley *Maianthemum dilatatum* – Glossy heart-shaped leaves carpeting damp forest floors.

Alaska Blueberry *Vaccinium alaskaense* – Sampled in clearings; sweet blue berries common in forest openings.

Salmonberry *Rubus spectabilis* – Bright orange-pink berries eaten in the field.