



**Alaska Sampler:  
Anchorage, Denali & Seward  
August 9 - 17, 2021**

List compiled by Dan Donaldson

**Guides Dan Donaldson and Kelly Vandenheuvel with 13 participants, Tracy & Glen, Carolyn & John, Helen & Harvey, Grace, Carolyn & David and Ashley, Margaret & Arthur, and Janet.**

**Summary:** Alaska is always a spectacular destination and this quick sampler trip the destinations of Anchorage, Seward's Kenai Fjords, and Denali National Park is a perennial favorite.

Basing out of Anchorage we visit local birding spots including, the wonderful Anchorage Coastal Trail, Lake Spenard and Lake Hood, and the Westchester Lagoons. By August, early bird migration is underway and we migrating waterfowl and passerines utilizing these areas. Steller's and Blue Jays were active, as were Merlins taking advantage of the new food sources in the area.

We bird along they as we travel to Seward for our Kenai Fjords experience. Stopping at Potter Marsh we pick apart feeding warbler flocks that contain Orange-crowned, Yellow, Wilsons, and Yellow-rumped warblers and Short-billed (Mew) gulls.

Our Kenai Fjord boat trip to the Northwestern Glacier and other smaller fjords afforded us classic looks at Harbor seals and Steller's Sea Lions resting high on rocky island outcrops along side Horned and Tufted Puffins. Our open water crossing gave us unusually good looks at Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers and Sooty Storm Petrels. The glaciers were actively calving with rain causing some accelerated action, making for great photos and video.

Denali National Park and Camp Denali gave us all classic fall tundra experiences. We even got snowed on a little bit. Daily hikes out of Camp Denali into the tundra gave us incredible Caribou encounters. Grizzlies, eating as many berries as possible in preparation for hibernation, were seen and photographed daily. Moose were busy as well eating willows and pond vegetation. Our return trip to Anchorage on the Alaska Railroad gave us one last chance so take in Alaska's scenery and to reflect on our trip.

**BIRDS (66 species recorded): MAMMALS (15 species recorded)**

**DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae (14)**

**Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*— small flocks seen on two days at Camp Denali while on tundra hikes.

**Cackling Goose** *Branta hutchinsii*— Observed on our days in Anchorage while walking the bike trail along Cook's Inlet.

**Trumpeter Swan** *Cygnus buccinator*— Seen at Kenai Lake along the road to Seward and back.

**Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata*— Observed on Wonder Lake on from the Denali Camp Bus.

**Gadwall** *Mareca strepera*— Observed on one of the unnamed ponds along the Denali Park Road while traveling for our daily tundra walks.

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana*—Seen daily in ponds along the Denali Park Road

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*—Seen at Lake Hood (the seaplane lake in Anchorage) on the road to Seward and daily in Denali National Park

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*—Individuals seen on Lake Hood and again in Camp Denali's Wonder Lake.

**Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca*— Individuals seen on Kenai Lake and again in Camp Denali's Wonder Lake.

**Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila*— observed in Anchorage's Lake Hood and several times in Denali National Park's Wonder Lake.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis*— seen at the Wonder Lake wetlands in Denali National Park.

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*— Individuals seen on Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage and again at Wonder Lake in Denali.

**Common Merganser** *Mergus merganser*— seen at our stop at Lake Hood in Anchorage and again in Denali National Park at Wonder Lake.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*—Observed on our last day in Denali on the drive out at Eielson Visitor Center along the river.

### **PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS AND ALLIES: Phasianidae (1)**

**Willow Ptarmigan** *Lagopus lagopus*— Fantastic looks and photos of family groups of this species. Great pictures, as they were fearless of our bus. Observed several times in Denali

### **GREBES: PODICIPEDIDAE (1)**

**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena*— Our best looks were a Westchester lagoon on our walk from The Copper Whale. We also observed a pair at a distance on Wonder Lake on one of our tundra hike outings.

### **PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (1)**

**Rock Pigeon (1)** *Columba livia*— Noted only in Seward near the active harbor areas.

### **PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae (1)**

**Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*— Observed feeding in a small tundra pond on one of the hikes out of Camp Denali.

### **SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (3)**

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*— Observed walking along a seaplane dock at Lake Hood in Anchorage.

**Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria*— Seen in Denali National Park, most notably at the Toklat River rest area.

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca*—Observed at Potter Marsh enroute to Seward and again in Denali and again in Wonderlake marsh area.

### **SKUAS AND JAEGER: Stercorariidae (2)**

**Parasitic Jaeger** *Stercorarius parasiticus*— Several close looks at these birds as they flew close to our boat on the Kenai Fjord tour. Seen during the open water portions of the trip. Several individuals were seen flying with a Pomarine Jager.

**Pomarine Jaeger** *Stercorarius pomarinus* – One individual identified flying in association with Parasitic Jagers in strong winds along the Kenai Fjords tour boat.

**AUKS, PUFFINS, AND ALLIES: Alcidae (4)**

**Pigeon Guillemot** *Cephus columba*— Many individuals observed flying to and from, often very near the Kenai Fjord tour boat.

**Rhinoceros Auklet** *Cerorhinca monocerata*— Observed as flybys and in association with groups of alcids along rocky cliffs shorelines in the Kenai Fjords.

**Horned Puffin** *Fratercula corniculata*— Observed as flybys and in association with groups of alcids along rocky cliffs shorelines in the Kenai Fjords.

**Tufted Puffin** *Fratercula cirrhata*— Observed as flybys and in association with groups of alcids along rocky cliffs shorelines in the Kenai Fjords.

**GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (3)**

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*— A fairly constant presence in the Seward area. Many individuals in the harbor area and several feeding groups just of shore.

**Mew Gull/Short-billed Gull** - *Larus canus*— Several individuals seen outside the harbor area

**Glaucous-winged Gull** *Larus glaucescens*— Regularly seen in Seward, especially in harbor areas. We spent quite a bit of time studying the differences between GWs and Herring gulls.

**LOONS: GAVIIDAE (1)**

**Common Loon** *Gavia immer*— Individuals seen on the Kenai Fjords tour and on Wonder Lake in Denali National Park.

**PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS: Procellariidae (1)**

**Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna grisea*— Many Sooty Shearwaters were seen during our open water crossings on the Kenai Fjord tour.

**CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (3)**

**Red-faced Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax urile*— Seward and Fjord Tour, we learned to keep our eyes out for the straight-necked flight silhouette of this species.

**Pelagic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*— Observed during the Kenai Fjord tour on rocky outcrops along shorelines

**Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus*— Observed associating with other cormorants on rocky outcrops on fjord tour.

**HERONS AND EGRETS: Ardeidae (1)**

**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias*— A couple sighting in the harbor areas of Seward.

**HAWKS, KITES, AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (4)**

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*— One individual seen flying the tundra areas below the Denali Park Road.

**Northern Harrier** *Circus hudsonius*— Several individuals seen in Denali Park and in meadows along the Alaska Railroad trip back to Anchorage.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk** *Accipiter striatus*— One Sharp-shinned hawk was seen chasing prey by one of the hiking excursions out of Camp Denali.

**Bald Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*— Several Bald Eagles observed during the Fjord tour but we had much closer looks at a nest with 3 chicks along the road just outside of Seward. **OWLS: Strigidae (XX)**

**KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae (1)**

**Belted Kingfisher** *Megaceryle alcyon*— Kingfishers we seen hunting the creek at the Bear Creek Weir near Seward.

**FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae (1)**

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*— Merlins were observed everyday on this trip including in Anchorage, Denali, Seward.

**SHRIKES: Laniidae (1)**

**Northern Shrike** *Lanius borealis*— Northern Shrikes were observed by some of the group on the tundra hikes and at the Eielson Visitor Center.

**CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (5)**

**Canada Jay** *Perisoreus canadensis*— Canada Jays were seen at Camp Denali near the pond, lodge and some guest cabins. Several were observed at the Teklanika rest stop.

**Steller's Jay** *Cyanocitta stelleri*— Observed in Anchorage along the bike path on our first walk of the trip.

**Black-billed Magpie** *Pica hudsonia*— Seen nearly daily including in Anchorage, Seward and Denali National Park.

**Northwestern Crow** *Corvus caurinus*— Alaska's version of the Fish Crow, this species of crow as observed daily in the Seward area.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*— Large and vocal, ravens were seen daily at every location.

**TITS AND CHICKADEES: Paridae (1)**

**Black-capped Chickadee** *Poecile atricapillus*— An unexpected surprise to some, these chickadees were seen in Anchorage along the bike path and again at Camp Denali.

**KINGLETS: Regulidae (1)**

**Golden-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus satrapa*— Seen in the willows at the Eielson Visitor Center.

**NUTHATCHES: Sittidae (1)**

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta canadensis*— observed in the forested area at the Bear Creek Weir near Seward.

**DIPPERS: Cinclidae (1)**

**American Dipper** *Cinclus mexicanus*— A juvenile bird found hunting for insects in the flowing water overtopping of the weir at Bear Creek.

**THRUSHES: Turdidae (2)**

**Gray-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus*— One individual found at the ranger office during one of the group outing from Camp Denali.

**American Robin** *Turdus migratorius*— American Robins were seen only on our first and last days which were in Anchorage.

### **OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS AND CHATS: Muscicapidae (1)**

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*— Seen by one of the Camp Denali hiking groups in the high tundra areas near the Eielson Visitor Center.

### **PIPITS AND WAGTAILS: Motacillidae (1)**

**American Pipit** *Anthus rubescens*— A few individuals observed while hiking near the Eielson Visitor Center.

### **NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (5)**

**American Tree Sparrow** *Spizelloides arborea*— Observed on hikes and in the brush near the cabins in Camp Denali.

**Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis*— Observed on hikes and in the brush near the cabins in Camp Denali.

**White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys*— Observed on hikes and in the brush near the cabins in Camp Denali.

**Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandwichensis*— Observed on hikes and in the brush near the cabins in Camp Denali.

**Song Sparrow** *Melospiza melodia*— Found around Lake Spenard (seaplane port) and roadside scrub in Camp Denali

### **NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae (4)**

**Orange-crowned Warbler** *Oreothlypis celata*— A couple individuals found in a warbler feeding flock at Potter Marsh parking lot.

**Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga petechia*— individuals found in a warbler feeding flock at Potter Marsh parking lot.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata*— individuals found in a warbler feeding flock at Potter Marsh parking lot.

**Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla*— individuals found in a warbler feeding flock at Potter Marsh parking lot.

## **Mammals (13 species)**

**Arctic Ground Squirrel** *Spermophilus parryii*— Seen regularly in Denali National Park

**American Red Squirrel** *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*— Several found in the forested areas in the lowlands of along the Denali Park Road.

**North American Porcupine** *Erethizon dorsatum*— One individual seen by a few of the group at Camp Denali.

**Caribou** *Rangifer tarandus*— Seen daily in Denali National Park, including an incredible close encounter by one hiking group that 3 males walk through the area where they had stopped for lunch.

**Moose** *Alces alces*— Seen and photographed several times along the Denali Park Road.

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*— fantastic looks at a black phase fox that favored a willow patch along the Denali Park Road.

**Brown (Grizzly) Bear** *Ursus arctos*— Seen daily in Denali National Park from the Camp Denali buses, Eielson Visitor Center, and while on one of our Camp Denali Tundra Hikes. (at a distance)

**American Black Bear** *Ursus americanus*— A sow with cubs were<sup>3</sup> seen by some of the group at Camp Denali.

**Sea Otter** *Enhydra lutris*— A few individuals were seen in the surf during the Kenai Fjord tour.

**Steller Sea Lion** *Eumetopias jubatus*—Seward – Kenai Fjord tour

**Harbor Seal** *Phoca vitulina*— Kenai Fjord tour – resting high on rocky outcrops that they had selected before the tide dropped.

**Humpback Whale** *Megaptera novaeangliae*— A single humpback whale found feeding near Rugged Island on our return leg of the Kenai Fjord tour.

**Dall's Porpoise** *Phocoenoides dalli*— Seward, a small pod of Dall's Porpoise were seen in the open water leg of the Kenai Fjord tour.