



June 12 – 19, 2021

Alaska's Northern Passages & Glacier Bay

Aboard the SS Legacy with UnCruise Adventures

With Peg Abbott and 13 participants: Jon, Polly, Liz, Bob, Linda, Leslie, Cathie, Dori, Priscilla, Peggy, Bill, Karl, and Patrick

Compiled by Peg Abbott

Summary: We were able to experience Southeast Alaska during two rare events that may not be repeated – we had sunshine on all but one day, and we were there in the absence of large cruise ships due to the pandemic. We could walk through Juneau without 15,000 visitors – and we had the seas almost to ourselves with the exception of some local fishing boats and a very few other small cruise ships. It was just awesome to be on this epic small boat cruise comeback with UnCruise, the adventure travel company we paired with for this journey. They were sensitive to conservation and to our desire to see wildlife and birds and witnessed some spectacles that not a one of us will ever forget. Topping the list was our night with whales, fifty or more at sunset, under a painted sky that lasted for hours. We just slowly moved around the area, listening to them breathe and bellow, watching them breach and dive, and at least four or five times we watched bubble-feeding as a cluster of a dozen or more would break heads vertical to the sky lunging on fish they had schooled up below. There were no words, it happened early on in the trip, and we all said, “how do we top this?” While birding was not fast and furious, we got good looks at some species hard to see elsewhere, including over 30 Kittlitz’s Murrelets in the water near their nesting areas of glacial boulder fields in Glacier Bay National Park. We found Tufted Puffins in prime plumage at South Marble Island and watched a pair mating on the water while others landed and scurried back into their burrows in the vegetation. We saw two species of jaeger, worked hard on gull ID, found a non-breeding group of Iceland (Thayer’s) Gulls, and on land got views of Red-breasted Sapsucker, Chestnut-backed Chickadee and a very dark race of Song Sparrow. We watched a Black Oystercatcher go after a Bald Eagle with gusto, bombarding it as it perched in high conifers above the shoreline. And we had clusters of male Harlequin Duck on some of the back bays, post-breeding but still-bright males – 18 in one group, wow! We found four Grizzly Bears in Glacier Bay and watched two work the shoreline, one descending over 600 feet almost vertically across rock and sparse vegetation to do so. There they dug for mussels, and we could see just how powerful their thick limbs were built for this digging. We saw many Sea Otters floating on the water, a few with pups and numerous Steller Sea Lions. Our group was most compatible, we interacted with others on the ship, and we had a Captain and crew that did everything possible to make ours the trip of a lifetime. A great week on the water in Alaska’s verdant Southeast Alaska on the Inland Passage.

(I)= Introduced

(HO) = Heard only

BIRDS (68 species in 25 families were recorded):

DUCKS, GEESE, AND SWANS: Anatidae (10)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*—We found this species on a couple of days, always in grassy areas along freshwater streams that came down to the sea, and at Kelp Bay flying overhead. Our final evening walk at Bartlett

Cove we heard their calls through the trees then saw them passing overhead. Not numerous, just two to six or so in the groups we saw.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*— Seen in Sitka at Swan Lake, then seen in good number, forty or more, on the grassy margins of a big river coming into Neka Bay. They were also on the crescent beach that we skiffed or kayaked around to on our one rainy blustery day with big waves and some swell to the sea.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*—A treat to spend time with this beautiful species, we saw mainly males in groups. We found them in several bays, at Kelp Bay one group was 18 and they were perched up on a pointed rock posing nicely. We found five on the small island we anchored by when we skiffed over. And then Liz and Bob spied two along the docks at Juneau we got very good views of, just down below us.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*—Seen by one of the skiffs on our day in Gut Bay.

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi*—Five seen flying by as we made our way down Chatham Strait on our second day by a few on the ship.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*—Jon spotted two flying by in Glacier Bay while we were on the big boat and then Peg's skiff found two floating in an area of ice chunks coming out of John Hopkins Glacier, swimming in an arctic-looking scene.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*—We worked on identification for this one for some time, a female at close range so we had good photos to work with – at Gut Bay in a quiet cove where we also found our first Grizzly.

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*— Seen on a freshwater pond on the trail we walked at Bartlett Cove, Polly had good photos for us to compare.

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*—Seen almost daily in good numbers, often loafing on the grassy margins of rivers coming into the sea that we would explore. We had one large group of males in bright plumage at Neka Bay upriver, but mainly we saw females as lone birds.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*—Seen on two days, lone individuals in flight in marine areas.

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (1)

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* (1)— Seen in Sitka and Juneau

HUMMINGBIRDS: Trochilidae (1)

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*— Seen in Sitka then, as we left the harbor, Jon and Polly had one swoop across the bow. One was seen on one of the hikes ashore on our third day as well.

OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae (1)

Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani*—Seen on rocky islands and coastal margins on four of our days. Some of our best looks were at those on the island we anchored in the lee of Neka Bay, where a pair held court and noisily tried to evict others that came in reach. As the tide went out their feeding area enlarged and spread out, but at high tide as many as six were trying to feed near this island, causing a bit of commotion. Then at the Inian Islands we saw an adult very unhappy with a Bald Eagle that had minutes before raided a gull nest not far from its territory. As the eagle passed through the oystercatcher went on full charge, calling incessantly and urgently and chasing the eagle up to a high perch about 80 feet up in a conifer. There it bombarded it again and again until the eagle was ducking down. As it quit the eagle lifted its head to call for its mate, also likely on a nest in the area. No easy parenting on this wild edge of Alaska where land and sea mix with gusto. We did find several pairs on territory also in Glacier Bay, one quite a way up towards the active glaciers, the other on South Marble Island.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (1)

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*—Dori and Priscilla had a lone individual fly over them while kayaking – they got very good looks while we were exploring Kelp Bay. Probably a non-breeding bird, but these – and other high Arctic nesting shorebird species – start to be seen on their southward migration in mid-July, so maybe this one was already on the move.

JAEGERS AND SKUAS: Stercorariidae (2)

Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*—Two individuals were seen as we made our way back from Cross Sound to Glacier Bay, in the waters of Icy Strait. The first was spotted by Jon, sitting on the water, and it flew robustly a long way forward. Cathie had another, harassing gulls.

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus*— While not expected on the trip, Polly worked fast and got good shots of this species on the day we focused our activities on Kelp Bay. I suspect the numerous Marbled Murrelets were attractive prey as well as abundant fish? We were so distracted by whales breaching and feeding all around us that others didn't get to see these 2 individuals!

AUKS, MURRES, AND PUFFINS: Alcidae (7)

Common Murre *Uria aalge*—Many former nest cliffs for this species are becoming too vegetated to be attractive to them. We did see them on five days, but always in small numbers, a pair or small group here and there at sea, leaving Sitka, en route to Gut Bay, in Icy Straits and then a few in Glacier Bay where in the days of John Muir they were nesting, but those sites are now forested, and not used today.

Pigeon Guillemot *Cephus columba*—Seen daily, this species was much at home in various nesting locations, from dock pilings in Sitka, Juneau, and Glacier Bay to cliffs along dramatic fjords. They would allow close approach by our skiffs until they would fly off revealing their fire-engine red feet. We could hear them whistling to each other, and watched them near waterfalls or stream outlets bathing where the fresh water came in. We saw one full-size individual in winter plumage in the bay we explored from Pavlov Harbor, with the rest in their more expected dapper black-and-white.

Marbled Murrelet *Brachyramphus marmoratus*—One of the highlights of the trip was to be in a region where this intriguing species is so numerous; south of Alaska, this species is listed as Threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Its nest was undiscovered until 1961 and 1974, when the first verified observations were reported from Asia and North America, respectively. They nest on limbs of large trees in ancient forests, and as the chick must make it to sea on its first flight – driven by hunger when the parents fail to come home, the coastline here with its lush forest cover is ideal for them. We saw pairs on all our skiff outings, and at eye-level on kayak trips. We heard them call to each other and watched a few greetings, likely the nest attendant coming down to water and joining its mate. On a couple of days, we saw foursomes with what appeared to be chicks of good size. Seen on six days of the eight days of our trip.

Kittlitz's Murrelet *Brachyramphus brevirostris*—This murrelet nests in boulder fields associated with mountain cirque basins, and we eagerly looked for them in Glacier Bay. We had quick looks at two coming from Marjorie Glacier, but then coming into Lamplugh Glacier we found over thirty. One group was 12, moving together in a raft. Others were two or three, some together among bergie bits of ice floating out of the John Hopkins glacier for some ways. We could see them very well from the skiffs and got some great photos. This is a sought-after species and one that is a treat to study and learn more about.

Cassin's Auklet *Ptychoramphus aleuticus*— Leaving Glacier Bay Jon saw 2 small, pale-bellied alcids flying away at a distance that most likely was this species.

Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata*—Peg saw a small group of four as we left Juneau [location – should this be Sitka?], following the Inland Passageway of Chatham Strait after the junction coming from Peril Strait and Sitka.

Tufted Puffin *Fratercula cirrhata*—We searched and searched without luck on our day out to Cross Sound with proximity to the open ocean. Peg had had very good luck here before, but later in the season so we surmised they must all be near nesting areas now. Thankfully South Marble Island is still a good nesting area for them, and we got superb views on our last full field day. We watched them in flight, saw some land and scurry into their burrows, and had one pair that mated on the water, close enough for many to see and some to grab some photos.

GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (7)

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*—Seen on five of our days, and when seen, numerous. They often formed resting groups on the water alongside areas of colonies, with at least 1 group composed entirely of first-year, non-breeding birds. We had them nesting on steep cliff walls of small islands, a common species on this trip.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*—Seen morning and afternoon at Neka Bay, acrobatic in their feeding style, seen in a group with one adult with a full black head and numerous non-breeding birds.

Mew Gull *Larus canus*—Seen infrequently at Juneau, Kelp Bay and then Glacier Bay National Park.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*—Noted on three of our days, often with other gull species. Gut Bay, Kelp Bay and Pavlov Harbor.

Iceland (Thayer's) Gull *Larus glaucooides* —We ran into non-breeding individuals of this species. Normally a wintering bird in this area, adults go off to the remote Canadian Arctic to breed, but we found them at Kelp Bay and at sea near the area the whales were feeding in profusion. Cathie and Peg first spied them during dinner and jumped out on deck to confirm. They were then resting on rocks of Kelp Bay alongside several Herring Gulls. There may have been more in the area, from a moving boat the large gulls, which can hybridize get a bit tough to pin down.

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*—The most common and widespread gull species of our trip, seen every day in both adult and subadult plumages. We also noted hybrids one could focus just on gulls and still be sorting them – this complex is tough from moving boats without scopes.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*—Cathie found one individual in Glacier Bay National Park feeding with gulls.

LOONS: Gaviidae (3)

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata*—Seen on our first two days, coming out of Sitka and en route to Gut Bay.

Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica*—Seen along Chatham Strait where Peril Strait comes into it, very productive for food here due to the mixing of current. We then saw them in the lower areas of Glacier Bay National Park, Priscilla and Peg up on deck watched several in the ships path paddle across the water trying to get airborne, leaving trails in the water as designs. Their silver head and mantle just shone in the soft light that final day.

Common Loon *Gavia immer*—Seen on three days, both adults and one in non-breeding plumage, most in ocean waters of the big straits but two were seen in the same area as the Pacific Loons were using in a wide part of lower Glacier Bay. In the side bay to our mooring at Pavlov Harbor, we found two and got fine looks at them near the shoreline.

CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (2)

Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*—The most common cormorant of the last three days of our trip, much at home at sea where there were steep-walled cliffs to rest and breed on. Our best views were on the seabird nesting island we circled in the Inian Islands at the opening to the Gulf of Alaska at the northernmost terminus of Alaska's inland passage. They were nesting in tall cracks in cliffs walls but resting on a rocky outcrop of an island. We were able to get close enough to appreciate the beautiful iridescent colors, bright facialmarks and white flank patches of birds in breeding plumage; immature, one-year-old bids were more brownish, and lacked flank patches. We also had them in Glacier Bay National Park.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*—A few individuals were seen on our first two days from Sitka into Chatham Strait.

HERONS AND EGRETS: Ardeidae (1)

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*—Seen on two days of the trip, three were seen a narrow bay we explored from Pavlov Harbor and then one at a quiet area with a large river coming into Neka Bay.

HAWKS, KITES, AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (2)

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*—Seen on a hike onshore while in Neka Bay.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*—Common, seen daily but they never lost their majesty. Some days we saw a dozen or more, mostly full adults. We watched them fish, listened to their loud musical chirping which was the most common bird sound of the trip, watched pairs at nests, and had them fly overhead at close range. Southeast Alaska is a wonderful place for eagles and its nice to see them thriving.

KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae (1)

Belted Kingfisher *Megasceryle alcyon*—One was seen by the hikers that went ashore at Pavlov Bay near the fish ladder, later in the trip one was seen at the very outer edge of the islands rimming the end of the Inland Passage near Elfin Cove in Cross Sound, and then on our final day one patrolled the harbor at Juneau.

WOODPECKERS: Picidae (2)

Red-breasted Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus ruber*—This one was on Polly's wish list and going ashore at Pavlov Bay she was rewarded with super looks at an active nest with begging juveniles. On the same morning several of our group saw three individuals on a different hike. Another was seen on the birding meander at Neka Bay.

Hairy Woodpecker *Dryobates villosus*—Seen flying into the forest on a skiff ride our first day at Gut Bay on Admiralty Island, and another on a shore hike in the same area.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae (2)

Merlin *Falco columbarius*—One individual was seen harassing a passing Bald Eagle from its perch on a small island in a bay around the corner from Pavlov Harbor.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*— **(HO)** Heard only at Gloomy Knob in Glacier Bay National Park. It was repeatedly screaming from the cliff face, but with two Grizzly Bears and a herd of Mountain Goats with kids putting on a show we did not take time to search for it. There were murrelets of both species here, other seabirds, a Black-legged Kittiwake colony – a very productive stop on our cruise through this national park.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae (1)

Pacific-slope Flycatcher *Empidonax difficilis*—We got good looks from the parking lot at Thimbleberry Creek at Sitka, then heard them from the boats and ashore in several of the quieter bays.

CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (3)

Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri*—First heard repeatedly calling while we watched our first Grizzly Bear on a skiff ride on Gut Bay, then seen in Kelp Bay where there were also Northwestern Crows present.

Northwestern Crow *Corvus caurinus*—Very common, seen daily. Although a 2020 taxonomic decision considers all crows in the coastal regions from southern Alaska south to Washington to be a smaller variation of the widespread American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), the birds that we saw were behaviorally very different from what most of us are familiar with. We often saw groups of 10 or more feeding in the tidal areas, and their vocalizations were noticeably different. They often chased Bald Eagles passing through their terrain.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*—Very common in Sitka and Juneau, with numbers in the 20+ range. At Sitka they beg in the park by the waterfront and make an amazing array of sounds as they do so. Some days in the wilds they were absent, and on the three days seen out of the urban areas, we had only one or two. Jon commented this is the reverse of the crow / raven situation most other places, where ravens are more typically the wildland species.

TITS AND CHICKADEES: Paridae (1)

Chestnut-backed Chickadee *Poecile rufescens*—Seen in Sitka, and then heard in Gut Bay, on the walk to the waterfall at Pavlov Harbor, and then seen in Bartlett Cove when we walked there the evening before our Glacier Bay cruise.

SWALLOWS AND MARTINS: Hirundinidae (3)

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*—Seen in Sitka at the Fortress of the Bear, and then it showed up in several areas along the way, one or two individuals in coastal areas.

Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*—Common in Sitka and Juneau and seen at Kelp Bay.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*—Seen in Sitka, at the docks of Glacier Bay's Bartlett Cove ranger station, and then in Juneau.

KINGLETS: Regulidae (2)

Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa*—A flock came through as we were on a historical guided tour at Sitka National Historic Park where we saw so many amazing totem poles. They were heard again in conifer forest at Bartlett Cove of Glacier Bay.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*—Seen in Sitka and then heard almost any time we got close enough to shore on skiff rides, a common species of the northwest forest.

WRENS: Troglodytidae (1)

Pacific Wren *Troglodytes pacificus*—Pavarotti of the bird world, this little bird belts out its song often and loudly. We saw one quite well at the raptor center in Sitka, had a few on our walks and heard them from the skiffs often. Noted daily.

STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae (1)

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (I)—Seen on the streets of Sitka and then again in Juneau.

THRUSHES: Turdidae (4)

Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius*— This bird's hauntingly beautiful call was present throughout our voyage. They were noted daily, often several individuals, but finally at Bartlett Cove on the walk with Jon and Dawn they were seen well after responding to playbacks. A few got a look in the Sitka National Historical Park as well.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*— Music to our ears, daily within hearing range of land, or on walks afield. At times we'd find them high in a conifer on their performing perch. The Swainson's Thrushes of southeast Alaska and the Pacific coast may someday be split from the Swainson's Thrushes found in the rest of North America; the birds we saw will winter in western Mexico and Central America, while other populations will migrate to South America.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*—We learned that this one introduces its song with a strong single note and had lots of practice teasing them out from the Swainson's. Both are very common. We watched one bathing from a skiff one day along the coastal edge, it had found a freshwater pocket in a large rock that obviously was a delight.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*—We traveled far up a river that entered Neka Bay at high tide, getting several miles inland, and on grassy flats at the turnaround point we spied – American Robins. Four individuals, the first of the trip. They were also present at Glacier Bay's Bartlett Cove, near the Tribal House. Fun to see an old, familiar backyard friend in a completely remote wilderness setting.

FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS: Fringillidae (1)

Pine Siskin *Spinus pinus*—Seen first at Sitka, in town and at the Sitka National Historic Park on trails. Heard in the back reaches of Gut Bay on a skiff ride. We then found them at Bartlett Cove feeding in spruce trees near the Tribal House.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (3)

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*—One of the more common songbirds, there were already fledged young begging in Juneau. We heard their even, strong calls at several spots near shore, and they were common in Sitka as well.

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*— Seen well in Sitka at the Beak restaurant, and in the Sitka National Historical Park and at Fortress of the Bear. A large, very dark race occurs here.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolni*— On our final day, several of the group opted to go up the Tram to the nature center and shrubby tree line habitat while in Juneau. Cathie spied a Lincoln's Sparrow much at home in that habitat, close to Father Brown's Cross.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae (5)

Orange-crowned Warbler *Oreothlypis celata*—Our best views were walking back to Sitka from the historical park, one was feeding in a garden on a flowering Mountain Ash.

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*—Hard singing strongly and then seen showing off their lovely red stripes at both Sitka and Juneau.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata*—Seen at Sitka National Historic Park.

Townsend's Warbler *Setophaga townsendi*— Seen at Sitka National Historic Park, then heard on the birding meander at Neka Bay. Another was encountered atop the tram ride on the Alpen Loop trail in Juneau.

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*—(HO) Heard from our mooring at the Inian Islands, Peg checked the call and it answered readily, almost sounding happy to have some company. Jon heard them again on a walk at Neka Bay.

MAMMALS (14 species recorded):

American Black Bear *Ursus americanus*—We saw one large individual, spotted by Karl with no binoculars as we cruised along the mainland not far from the turn up to Glacier Bay. It stayed visible for some time, and many crowded in the dining room windows to see it as we were at dinner at the time.

Brown (Grizzly) Bear *Ursus arctos*—We found one on our first morning skiff ride at Gut Bay, feeding on sedges and other plants in a wetland area at the back of a cove. We cut the engine and sat watching it for some time. We then bruised our eyeballs looking at shorelines for days with no other sighting. Then Glacier Bay brought smiles to all as four were seen that day! One showed up about 5:30AM as we cruised into Marjorie Glacier. A second was on the rocks at Lamplugh Glacier, seen by both the skiff ride and the kayakers. Two more gave us a half hour or more of fine viewing at Gloomy Knob where we watched them on very steep slopes move down to feed in tidewater areas, digging for mussels. These were huge individuals, very impressive sites!

Harbor Seal *Phoca vitulina*—The most common mammals observed, we saw them resting feeding, loafing on rocks, and with pups. Seen most days of the trip with the exception of Sitka and Juneau. They were at home on rocky shores and in the ice near glaciers.

Steller's Sea Lion *Eumetopias jubatus*— Fantastic views of these wildland creatures. We saw HUGE males that roared and pushed each other around on land and water in Cross Sound and then saw hundreds on South Marble Island in Glacier Bay National Park. We marveled that on several occasions we saw them feeding with whales, where they would leap out of the water, then dive as the whales did, probably uninvited to the abundant feast.

American Mink *Neovision vision*—The bushwhackers saw a mink in the tide zone on their outing at Gut Bay.

North American River Otter *Lontra canadensis*— Also seen at Gut Bay, staying some time for the group walking the beach to observe.

Sea Otter *Enhydra lutris*—An absolutely endearing mammal, we had close up time while cruising in Cross Sound and the Inian Islands. We saw them often, floating buoyantly – often way out from any land, perfectly at home. On a skiff ride in the Inian islands, one skiff went farther out to an islet, and behind it found thirty or more rafting together, two with tiny pups, a nursery group. At Glacier Bay where we anchored at the dock at Bartlett Cove, a larger pup rode around on its mothers' stomach then slipped back to hold her feet as she pulled it along. Hungry, she went for a dive, and the little one popped around like a cork, looking just like a tiny version of the adult. It seemed so vulnerable, perhaps why they hang out away from shore. Some days we'd seen a dozen or more, observed on five days of our journey.

Sitka Deer *Odocoileus hemionus*—We got quick looks at these small black-tailed deer coming to the shoreline from dense forest areas. One duo Peg observed seemed to be licking salt from a rock at the shoreline. One we saw was found as we watched two Common Loon, a nice pairing of species. Recent authorities treat the mule deer and black-tailed deer as conspecific, with the Sitka Black-tailed Deer being the smallest member of the group.

Mountain Goat *Oreamnos americanus*— We saw them only at one spot, despite lots of looking. This was at Gloomy Knob in Glacier Bay National Park and there were six or eight, one with a young kid. A big billy was down right at the water edge, unusual to see. They seemed very much at home in their mountain realm, but two Grizzly Bears were in the area, probably keeping them to the steepest terrain.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*—The iconic species of the trip. We had numerous and multiple sightings on several days, at times in quiet bays, in Kelp Bay one that was foraging close to shore surfaced so close to one of our skiffs that our passengers were splashed!. Most impressive was the whale gathering we observed near Catherine Island off Admiralty, where we witnessed "whale soup" – food so abundant that fish were rising up and running like streams in the open ocean. We could hear the whales breathe, and near dusk one trumpeted as loud as a bull elephant. The sky that night got more intensely painted with each moment of sunset. For a couple of ours we just absorbed this beauty, all of the crew were up on deck, even those supposedly off shift and sleeping. The captain and engineer said it was rare experience, and we all felt the magic. Later in the trip we got into multiple whales, fifteen or more, at Pt. Adolphus. We saw then spout and rise in Glacier Bay. If for no other reason to take this cruise, whale sightings in such abundance are a thrill!

Killer Whale (Orca) *Orcinus orca*—We started our cruise with quite a show from five Orca, including a huge male with a tall dorsal fin, two females and two youngsters. There were additional members of probably the same pod at some distance from them, but this group was very close to the ship and a real thrill. They first appeared about

5:15AM and by 5:30 our cruise coordinator, Dawn, got on the intercom to wake folks - this was just too special to miss! Luckily, the whales stayed around for a good part of the next half hour. Our only certain sighting of the trip.

Harbor Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*—The most common porpoise we encountered, seen on four days of the trip, usually in small groups. At Kelp Bay a small group were intrigued by our skiff and came quite close.

Dall's Porpoise *Phocoenoides dalli*—Seen on our third day, traveling into Kelp Bay.

American Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*—Heard from the boat as we traveled near shore, and on a couple of walks, they were seen at Bartlett Cove in Glacier Bay on our walks there.