

# Classic Alaska: Nome, Anchorage, Utqiagvik & Seward | Species List

## June 10 – 21, 2022 | with Naturalist Journeys



List compiled by Dan Donaldson

**With guides Greg Smith and Dan Donaldson and 10 participants: Sid, Janet and David, Sue C, Susan P, and Sue M, Jim, Karen, Carol and Husam.**



Our group spent 10 wonderful days exploring three distinct regions of Alaska: tundra, coastal temperate rain forest and the incredible views of the Harding icefield glacier area. We thoroughly explored Nome, Anchorage, Eagle River and Seward. Nome provided the wonderful tundra habitats with plenty of Musk Ox and Long-tailed Jaegers. Anchorage and Eagle River consisted of coastal temperate rain forest where we found wonderful bird species like Black-backed Woodpeckers and waterfowl. Seward, located on the Kenai Peninsula south of Anchorage, provided access to the Kenai Fjords and Chiswell Island areas where we saw many seabirds and mammals, and of course, incredible views of many glaciers.

(HO)= Distinctive enough to be counted as heard only

(I)=introduced

### **BIRDS (116 species recorded, of which 0 were heard only):**

#### **DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae (15)**

**Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens* – Observed at Nome River outlet.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*— Oddly, only observed at Potter's Marsh.

**Cackling Goose** *Branta hutchinsii*— Seen daily and in great numbers, ranging from parks to tundra kettle ponds.

**Trumpeter Swan** *Cygnus buccinator*— Seen daily in Nome at Nome River Mouth and in various tundra kettle ponds.

**Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata*— Observed in ponds along Nome Council Road.

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana*— American Widgeons were found in the quiet river waters along Nome Teller Highway and seen again at Potter Marsh along the Highway 1 pull-offs.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*— Regulars at Westchester Lagoon and Potter Marsh in Anchorage.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*— Pintails were regulars in tundra ponds along Council and Teller highways.

**Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca*— Found in the same kettle ponds in the Nome area, but also at Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*— Two flocks of 10 or so observed from Potter Marsh Road pull-offs.

**Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila*— Many observed daily along Nome routes and again at Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage.

**Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima* – At the Nome Granite Quarry Pier, where we also saw the baby Beluga whale.

**Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus*— Observed several times in Nome, but best seen and photographed at the quarry pier along the Nome Council Road.

**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*— A group of three flew by at the Nome Granite Quarry Pier, again along Nome Teller Road in the braided channels of unnamed creeks.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*— Observed daily in Nome and again at Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage.

#### **PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS AND ALLIES: Phasianidae (2)**

**Willow Ptarmigan** *Lagopus lagopus*— Seen most days in Nome; Willow Ptarmigans were found along the Nome Teller Highway in the draws and stream valleys that were protected enough from snow and wind to allow trees and shrubs to dominate the landscape.

**Rock Ptarmigan** *Lagopus muta*— Rock Ptarmigans observed only once on a higher tundra hilltop. No rocks in site!

**White-tailed Ptarmigan** *Lagopus leucura*— We searched hard for White-tailed Ptarmigan at higher elevations in the forests near Alyeska and the Alyeska Ski Resort.

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

**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena*— Observed in Nome and Anchorage as they are common breeders this time of year. Stunning looks at a breeding pair with very young chicks at Westchester Lagoon.

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

**Rock Pigeon (I)** *Columba livia*— Common in Anchorage.

#### **CRANES: GRUIDAE (1)**

**Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis*— Found at several locations in Nome along both Council and Teller Roads, and again at Potter Marsh.

#### **OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae (1)**

**Black Oystercatcher** *Haematopus bachmani*— Bonded pair observed on a small rock island in the Chizwell Islands during our Glacier Boat Cruise out of Seward.

#### **PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae (3)**

**American Golden-Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* – It was wonderful to see so many AMGPs noisily nesting on the tundra in the Nome area.

**Pacific Golden-Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* – Great studies in the differences between Pacific and American Golden-Plovers with both species present at Nome River Mouth.

**Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*— Seen daily in Nome. Bonded pairs of semis were found throughout the tundra areas surrounding Nome. Hearing their call was a unique treat for those of us who only see this species during migration.

#### **SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (13)**

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* – We encountered Whimbrels several times on this trip including a couple nesting pairs on Coffee Dome outside Nome, where we searched for Bristle-thighed Curlews.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* – A wonderful and large Godwit, Bar-taileds were easily observed in the Nome River outlet lagoon on several occasions.

**Black Turnstone** *Arenaria melanocephala* – A treat to see, especially for those from the eastern U.S., we found them in the Nome River outlet lagoon.

**Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla*— A few individuals observed in Nome on exposed mud in tundra ponds.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla*- Seen daily in Nome in most any slow-moving water.

**Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* – Seen in many locations in Nome, offering good ID clinics comparing them to Semipalms.

**Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus*— We observed one working low tide mudflats along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in Anchorage.

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*— One was associating with Short-billeds in the Nome River Outlet lagoon.

**Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago delicata*— Observed several on our treks out of Nome.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*— Found throughout the Nome area with a breeding pair in most every tundra kettle pond.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*— Spotteds were found in slow moving creek waters along both the Teller and Council Roads in Nome.

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca*— Easily observed at Potter Marsh in Anchorage along with Lesser Yellowlegs were also present.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*—Several observed at Potter Marsh.

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

**Pomarine Jaeger** *Stercorarius pomarinus* – One observed offshore from the quarry pier.

**Long-tailed Jaeger** *Stercorarius lingicaudus* – Just incredible views of these tundra hunters throughout our time in Nome. Perhaps the most photographed bird of the trip.

#### **AUKS, PUFFINS, AND ALLIES: Alcidae (7)** Note: all birds in this section were seen in Seward /Chiswell Islands.

**Common Murre** *Uria aalge*— Many observed on our Glacial/Pelagic boat trip aboard the *North Western* out of Seward. Murres were using the same cliffs as the Horned Puffins along the outer Chiswell Islands.

**Pigeon Guillemot** *Cephus columba*— Many observed feeding throughout our pelagic glacier tour.

**Marbled Murrelet** *Brachyramphus marmoratus*— Found deep inside fjords enroute to glaciers.

**Ancient Murrelet** *Brachyramphus antiquus*— Seward's Resurrection Bay as we motored through the Chiswell islands.

**Parakeet Auklet** *Aethia psittacula*— We had wonderful observations and photographs of Parakeet Auklets hunting and diving in groups as we motored through the Chiswells.

**Horned Puffin** *Fratercula corniculata*— We saw plenty of puffins on this trip, but Horned Puffins outnumbered the Tufted Puffins by far. We had ample time on the deck of the ship to watch puffins feed, dive and fly to and from their nesting burrows.

**Tufted Puffin** *Fratercula cirrhata*— Tufted Puffins were a little scarce, perhaps due to the unusually warm temperature, but we saw several pairs.

#### **GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (6)**

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*— Seen regularly in Nome and Seward.

**Short-billed (Mew) Gull** *Larus canus*— Observed daily in most habitats. Beautiful in breeding plumage with their dark eyes and blood red eye-rings.

**Glaucous-winged Gull** *Larus glaucescens*— These large gulls, named for their light gray wing tips, were very common in Seward and Potter Marsh.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*—Seen in Nome, it's white wing tips and the absence of black on this bird made for easy identification.

**Aleutian Tern** *Onychoprion aleuticus* – An unexpected treat was to witness a cotillion of Aleutian Terns fly by at the Nome River outlet lagoon. They have a beautiful trilling call, which is in stark contrast to the rasp of the Arctic Tern.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*— Seen daily wherever there was water and fearless of people, they will dive bomb your head if you approach a nest. Many were photographed, especially at Potter Marsh.

### **LOONS: GAVIIDAE (3)**

**Red-throated Loon** *Gavia stellata*— Prolific breeder in the Nome region as most every tundra pond throughout the area hosted a pair of Red-throated loons and Red Phalaropes.

**Pacific Loon** *Gavia pacifica*— Pacific Loons breed in tundra ponds as well but seemed to prefer deeper ponds and lakes.

**Common Loon** *Gavia immer*— Only a few seen on this trip, all were single birds in saltwater environments.

### **CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (2)**

**Pelagic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*— Observed on the Bering Sea off the quarry pier, and again in Seward on our Glacier Boat tour.

**Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus*— Seen only in Seward on the boat docs around the harbor and out in the Chiswell Islands.

### **HAWKS, KITES, AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (3)**

**Northern Harrier** *Circus hudsonius*— Observed at least one each day on our treks around Nome.

**Bald Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*— Absent in Nome but prolific in Seward and areas surrounding Anchorage, including several very photogenic nesting pairs.

**Rough-legged Hawk** *Buteo lagopus*— Observed along the Nome-Teller Road.

### **OWLS: Strigidae (2)**

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*— One observed hunting the meadows just off the beach just east of downtown Nome.

**Snowy Owl** *Bubo scandiacus* – One found by a participant that stayed back at the van while we hiked Coffee Dome – searching for curlews.

### **WOODPECKERS: Picidae (3)**

**Black-backed Woodpecker** *Picoides arcticus*— A great find, we first heard the calls of chicks resonating from a fresh woodpecker hole. After about a 15-minute stakeout, both adults appeared with food and entered the nest cavity. Fantastic experience and a life bird for many. A highlight of the trip for sure.

**Downy Woodpecker** *Dryobates pubescens*—Observed on our Eagle River hike, perhaps the most beautiful river valley in the Anchorage area.

**Hairy Woodpecker** *Dryobates villosus*— Observed in town on trees near the marina.

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

**Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus*— There's a well-known Gyr Falcon nest on a bridge on the Nome Council Road. We located it and found two large chicks that were constantly focusing their binocular vision on us as we were focusing our binoculars on them! Adults were observed nearby on our return trip a couple hours later.

### **TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae (2)**

**Alder Flycatcher** *Empidonax alnorum*— Present wherever appropriately sized trees were located, we heard and observed many at Potter Marsh, Westchester Lagoon, Eagle River and in Seward.

**Olive-sided Flycatcher** *Contopus cooperi* – Heard and briefly seen at Eagle River Nature Center.

#### **CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (4)**

**Canada Jay** *Perisoreus canadensis*— Beautiful and bold, these fearless jays came to investigate us at the small woodlot at mile post 78 at the very end of the Nome Council Road.

**Black-billed Magpie** *Pica hudsonia*— A common sighting in Anchorage and Seward areas, with our closest looks along the Coastal Trail.

**American Crow** *Corvus brachyrhynchos* – Yes, it's progress to more accurately speciate all the birds out there, but it was sad when this bird, the "Fish Crow of the north," was lumped with Northwestern Crows. Observed in Anchorage and Seward.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*— Boisterous ravens were observed in all regions on this trip: Nome, Anchorage and Seward.

#### **SWALLOWS AND MARTINS: Hirundinidae (3)**

**Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor* - Tree swallows were common on this trip, seen in Nome, Anchorage and especially at Potter Marsh and in Seward.

**Violet-green Swallow** *Tachycineta thalassina* – Stunningly beautiful when you can get them to sit long enough to view, VGs were mixed in with Tree Swallows at Potter Marsh and were observed again near the Bear Creek Weir near Seward.

**Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* – Cliff Swallows were observed in the quarry area along Nome Teller Hwy, sometimes seen while we were searching for the Brambling.

#### **TITS AND CHICKADEES: Paridae (2)**

**Black-capped Chickadee** *Poecile atricapillus*— Always a little surprising to find Black-capped Chickadees this far north, however this species ranges from the Carolinas all the way up to Utqiagvik/Barrow.

**Boreal Chickadee** *Poecile hudsonicus*— At mile post 78 at the end of Nome-Council Road where we saw the Canada Jays.

#### **LEAF-WARBLERS: Phylloscopidae (1)**

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis*— Circumpolar migrants, this warbler is not considered a new-world warbler as it is found throughout the arctic. We observed them daily in willow and alder patches along tundra roadsides in Nome.

#### **KINGLETS: Regulidae (1)**

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus calendula*— Seen on both of our excursions to Eagle River Nature Center.

#### **NUTHATCHES: Sittidae (1)**

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta canadensis*— Eagle River Nature Center in the floodplain woods along with Brown Creepers.

#### **CREEPERS: Certhiidae (1)**

**Brown Creeper** *Certhia americana*— We had great Brown Creeper observations with several pairs working the floodplain forest along the Albert Loop Trail.

#### **DIPPERS: Cinclidae (1)**

**American Dipper** *Cinclus mexicanus*— Fantastic American Dipper observations on the Nome Council Hwy, where we found a nesting pair under a bridge. We watched them forage for newly hatched trout fry from the creek and



deliver them back to the nest under the bridge. Dippers were also found at the Bear Creek Weir and stream in Seward.

#### **THRUSHES: Turdidae (4)**

**Varied Thrush** *Ixoreus naevius*—Varied Thrushes were found throughout the Eagle River Nature Center area.

**Gray-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus*— Seen in Nome, often in the young alder trees that pioneer along the disturbed roadways. They were singing as they were on breeding territory and thus easily seen perched on the highest point in their territory.

**Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus*— Observed throughout the Eagle River area, also singing, but often seen hunting along the nature center trails.

**American Robin** *Turdus migratorius*—Observed daily in all locations for this trip. AMROs are perhaps the most wide-ranging breeder in North America.

#### **PIPITS AND WAGTAILS: Motacillidae (2)**

**Eastern Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla tschuschenis* – A nesting pair was found in a boulder field along the Nome-Council Road, just down the road from the rusting locomotives.

**American Pipit** *Anthus rubescens*—Favoring barren rocky landscapes, American Pipits were observed in Nome areas, both on the Nome-Council Road and Nome Teller Highway.

#### **FINCHES: Fringillidae (5)**

**Pine Grosbeak** *Pinicola enucleator*— Several pairs visited the famous Ava's Place feeders just outside Seward.

**Common Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea*— Flocks of Common Redpolls were seen and heard rolling through Nome, often stopping at the few houses that had feeders.

**Hoary Redpoll** *Acanthis hornemanni* – Found at one of our roadside stops at Cape Nome on the Nome-Teller Highway.

**Pine Siskin** *Spinus pinus*— Our only sighting was a small flock located in the woodlot just off the Palmer Hayflats parking lot where we stopped on our way back from Eagle River.

**Brambling** *Fingilla montifringilla* – An unexpected, though not extremely rare, visitor to Alaska, it took several daily attempts for us to finally locate this bird at Cape Nome. We often stopped on our way to and from our early morning trips to the Nome Teller Bridge., and on our fourth attempt we finally located it!

#### **NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (8)**

**American Tree Sparrow** *Spizelloides arborea*— Interestingly, we only tallied Tree Sparrows in Nome on this trip – on Kougarak Road and Nome-Teller Hwy.

**Fox Sparrow** *Passerella iliaca*— It was wonderful to hear the beautiful song of singing Fox Sparrows throughout the Nome area.

**Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis*—Observed only in Anchorage and Eagle River.

**White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys*— Prolific on this trip and observed daily in all regions.

**Golden-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia atricapilla*— Wonderful to see, especially for the easterners on this trip, we saw and heard them daily throughout Nome.

**Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandwichensis*—Another prolific North American breeder, Savannahs can show up anywhere and were observed daily except for in the Seward area.

**Song Sparrow** *Melospiza melodia*— There are many subspecies of Song Sparrow, and Alaska has the largest form, surprisingly large, which we found in Seward.

**Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolnii*— Found on our last day of birding at Eagle River wetland complex.

#### **NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS: Icteridae (1)**

**Rusty Blackbird** *Euphagus carolinus*— Observed along the Nome-Council Road and again at Eagle River Nature Center wetlands complex.

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

**Northern Waterthrush** *Parkesia noveboracensis*— Observed daily in Nome in appropriate habitats.

**Orange-crowned Warbler** *Oreothlypis celata*— Orange-crowned Warblers can sometimes be a difficult identification, but knowing their call sure helps! We observed them in Nome and Eagle River.

**Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga petechia*— Most commonly seen on our Nome excursions where they were found in many roadside shrub patches.

**Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla*— Always a welcome observation, WIWAs were observed daily in Nome, again along shrubby roadsides.

### **Mammals (16 species)**

**Western Meadow Vole** *Microtus drummondii* – A few were seen scurrying around our feet on Coffee Dome while we searched for the Bristle-thighed Curlew.

**Hoary Marmot** *Marmota caligata*— I didn't make notes of a sighting, but I'm pretty sure that we saw one in Nome.

**Arctic Ground Squirrel** *Spermophilus parryii*— Observed along the Nome-Teller hwy.

**Snowshoe Hare** *Lepus americanus*— Many observations in Nome, often running down the road in front of our vehicles!

**Moose** *Alces alces*— We never tired of moose sightings! We observed several in Nome feeding in willow thickets along river channels.

**Musk Ox** *Ovibos moschatus* – A quest mammal for everyone on the trip. Luckily, Musk Ox are not difficult to see in Nome, and we observed and photographed groups of up to 30 on our daily excursions out of Nome.

**Rocky Mountain Goat** *Oreamnos americanus*— Several were observed high on the rocky outcrops along the fjords on our Kenai Fjord Glacier trip.

**Dall Sheep** *Ovis dalli*— Wonderful photographs and observations of 15 sheep feeding on the cliffs above the highway along Turnagain Arm in Cook's Inlet on our Seward drive.

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*— Great observations of a Red Fox hunting the meadows along the shore just outside of Nome.

**Sea Otter** *Enhydra lutris*— Many observations on our Kenai Fjord Glacier tour out of Seward. Several Adults with pups we seen, especially along the Chiswell Islands.

**Steller Sea Lion** *Eumetopias jubatus*— Large groups were seen hauled out of the ocean throughout the Chiswell Islands in Seward on our Kenai Fjord Glacier tour.

**Harbor Seal** *Phoca vitulina*— Observed throughout our Kenai Fjord Glacier tour.

**Humpback Whale** *Megaptera novaeangliae*— Wonderful and lengthy observations of Humpback Whales on our Kenai Fjord tour out of Seward. We observed bubble net and group feeding behaviors, and even had a scare when a pod of Killer Whales approached a mother and calf. Fortunately they didn't take much interest.

**Killer Whale (Orca)** *Orcinus orca*— Wonderful observations on the Kenai Fjord tour, including identifying individuals from catalogs of previously photographed individuals. Many of the pods were well known to the crew, but we did come upon an unknown transient pod, the ones that approached the mother and calf humpbacks.

**Beluga Whale** *Delphinapterus leucas* – One baby Beluga Whale was found at the quarry pier at Cape Nome. It took us a while to figure out exactly what this animal was. It appeared to be alone, perhaps with some health problems, feeding along the shore.

**Dall's Porpoise** *Phocoenoides dalli*— Yes! Observed on the Kenai Fjord Glacial tour, well out into the Chiswell Islands.