



TROPICAL
BIRDING



ALASKA: BIRDING THE GREAT LAND

A Tropical Birding
Set Departure

June 7-20, 2024
Guide: Ken Behrens

Photos by Ken Behrens

TOUR SUMMARY

Alaska needs little introduction. It is the massive northern exclave of the United States; a great land of mountains, cold oceans, glaciers, and tundra. This is a place that any world traveller will eventually want to visit and with good reason. Birders have the added incentive of seeing a tantalizing set of northern birds, ranging from boreal forest birds like Black-backed Woodpecker and Spruce Grouse to tundra species like Bristle-thighed Curlew and Steller's Eider (shown in the photo above). This is also a great part of the world for mammals. On this trip, we recorded 16 species, including some mighty beasts like Polar Bear, Musk Ox, and Moose.

This trip covers three main areas: the Anchorage and Seward "tropical south", northwestern Nome, and far northern Barrow / Utqiagvik (the farthest north point in the US). Around Anchorage we bird coastal mudflats and marshes, as well as some beautiful boreal forest. Highlight birds included Surf-bird, Hudsonian Godwit, Boreal Chickadee, and Barrow's Goldeneye. Seward has a drastically different type of forest: the northernmost reaches of the Pacific Northwest rainforest, where we saw species like Townsend's Warbler, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and Varied Thrush. We also take a boat trip out of Seward to explore the fjords and glaciers that characterize this stretch of coast. Despite a one-day weather delay and some challenging weather when we finally

did venture out, we succeeded in seeing Tufted and Horned Puffins, Ancient Murrelet, and vast numbers of more common species such as Black-legged Kittiwake and Pelagic Cormorant. Nome has a wide variety of habitats, including rocky ridgeline tundra, boggy coastal tundra, willow thickets, and inland even some boreal forest. There was a rich set of highlights there including Yellow-billed and Arctic Loons, Bristle-thighed Curlew, King Eider, Black Turnstone, Rock Sandpiper, Red Knot, Bluethroat, and Arctic Warbler. Barrow is a bizarre though wonderful, in which trees and even bushes no longer grow. It is dead flat, and covered in boggy tundra. Although it is coastal, it is still virtually ice-bound in mid-June. Driving the small road network and slogging through the tundra gave us Steller's, Spectacled, and King Eiders, breeding Pectoral Sandpiper and Red Phalarope, and of course the "Barrow Sparrow" Snow Bunting, the area's most common bird. After the main tour ended, most of the participants opted to join the St. Paul extension to see a few more alcid species, other seabirds, and some Asian vagrants. This portion of the tour is guided by the excellent local team on St. Paul, rather than by a dedicated Tropical Birding guide.

For an immersive experience of this trip's highlights, check out the 10-minute video trip report:

[VIDEO TRIP REPORT on YouTube](https://youtu.be/MNGyKf1dYCK) <https://youtu.be/MNGyKf1dYCK>

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June 7	Arrival in Anchorage. Night Anchorage.
June 8	Anchorage to Seward. Night Seward.
June 9	Full day Seward area. Night Seward.
June 10	Seward boat trip. Late afternoon drive to Anchorage. Night Anchorage.
June 11	Flight from Anchorage to Nome. Night Nome.
June 12	Teller Road. Night Nome.
June 13	Kougarok Road. Night Nome.
June 14	Council Road. Night Nome.
June 15	Flight from Nome to Anchorage. Afternoon birding Anchorage. Night Anchorage.
June 16	Morning birding north of Anchorage. Flight from Anchorage to Barrow. Night Barrow.
June 17-18	Barrow / Utqiagvik.
June 19	Flight from Barrow to Anchorage. Night Anchorage.
June 20	Departure from Anchorage / Flight to St. Paul for Extension.

BIRD LIST

The full list, including numbers and many other details, can be see as part of the [eBird trip report](https://ebird.org/tripreport/270135) for this trip: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/270135>

MAMMAL LIST

Polar Bear	<i>Ursus maritimus</i>
Harbor Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>
Ribbon Seal	<i>Phoca fasciata</i>
Steller's Sea Lion	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>
Sea Otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>
Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>
Dall Sheep	<i>Ovis dalli</i>
Muskox	<i>Ovibos moschatus</i>
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
Snowshoe Hare	<i>Lepus americanus</i>
Tundra (Alaskan) Hare	<i>Lepus othus</i>
Arctic Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus parryii</i>
Red Squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
North American Beaver	<i>Castor canadensis</i>
Brown Lemming	<i>Lemmus trimucronatus</i>
Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethica</i>