

ALASKA: BARROW EXTENSION

JUNE 24 – 26, 2009

LEADER: BARRY ZIMMER

COMPILED BY: BARRY ZIMMER

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003
AUSTIN, TX 78746
WWW.VENTBIRD.COM**

Barrow, Alaska

June 24 – 26, 2009

Leader: Barry Zimmer

Itinerary:

June 24 – afternoon flight from Anchorage to Barrow

June 25 – all day spent working the three roads (Gaswell Road, Stevenson Road, and Freshwater Lake Road) that lead out of Barrow (38 species)

June 26 – polar bear excursion for some out to Point Barrow; recheck of all three roads; late evening flight back to Anchorage (32 species; 42 total)

Underlined species indicate birds of very uncommon occurrence or species that occur regularly but in such low density as to be easily missed

Bold-faced species indicate birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence in this area

Birds:

Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) seemed more conspicuous than usual this year with up to 75 in a day and many close views

Brant (*Branta bernicla*) the western black-bellied race *nigricans*

Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) scattered pairs throughout the tundra

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) a male near town along Stevenson Road was a rarity this far north

Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) one pair our first day

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*) the most common duck at Barrow

Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*) a few of the North American race *carolinensis*

Steller's Eider (*Polysticta stelleri*) seven total individuals provided superb views; three pairs along the Gaswell Road (spotted by Karen) and a lone male out towards Point Barrow; most recent years this species has been difficult to find

Spectacled Eider (*Somateria fischeri*) six to ten total; a lone female on the tundra out the Gaswell Road, a flock of four males along Stevenson Road on Day 1, and a flock of five males (four of them the same from the previous day?) further out Stevenson on Day 2; fantastic scope views of these strange but beautiful birds; as with Steller's can be devilishly hard to find

King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) nine total seen; two males (in flight), a female, and an immature male out the Gaswell Road, a close, stunning male in a small pond along Stevenson Road, two more females at the end of Stevenson in the ice, and a male and female along the Freshwater Lake Road

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*) lone male seen along the base of Stevenson Road on both days; the western race *v-nigra*; four females seen by me after hours flying by the point

Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) very numerous this year with scattered pairs on the tundra and big flocks in the pack ice along Stevenson (we counted 630 birds in one flock!)

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) four out at the end of Stevenson on Day 2

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) quite numerous both days

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) almost as common as Red-throated

Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) flyover along Gaswell Road on Day 2 was a real treat; often missed here

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) one along the Gaswell Road on day 1 was somewhat of a surprise

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) another rarity at Barrow, this one spotted by Mary out the Gaswell Road

American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) very common this year with birds all over the tundra; we had 50+ a day of these stunning breeding-plumaged birds

Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) a couple each day

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) maybe our rarest bird at Barrow was this species at Stint Pond

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) the common peep at Barrow

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*) five our first day

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*) good views of a couple of pairs

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*) this species was common throughout the tundra with puffed up displaying birds everywhere; 40+ per day

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) dapper breeding-plumaged birds scattered about; about a dozen each day

Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) two each day displaying out in the tundra near the end of the Gaswell Road; not present every year and always a treat to see!

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) a "white" breeding-plumaged male out near the new dump was distant but spectacular nonetheless; a great vagrant!

Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) nice views of birds close to the road

Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) one in display flight near the beginning of the Gaswell Road

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) about a half dozen of these each day

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) one of the most common birds of the tundra here with brilliant breeding-plumaged birds all about; we had 35 our first day

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) common

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) one the first day and about six the second; mostly out near Freshwater Lake

Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) this species was fairly numerous, but the complete lack of lemmings meant no Pomarines to be found

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) in a year when no Snowys were being found (including by local fish & wildlife folks) we got lucky finding a completely white bird on Day 2 about two miles out the Gaswell Road and then a bird speckled with black about a mile

further out later in the day; in good lemming years this species can be common, but when there are no lemmings the owls head for more promising hunting grounds

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) completely lost was this spruce forest dwelling bird feeding on the tundra out the Gaswell Road in company of a golden-plover!

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) a few each day

Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*) very common all around Barrow; gorgeous in their breeding plumage

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) abundant and brilliant

Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*) a few each day, including some at feeders in barrow

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*) a few each day as well; side by side with a common at a local feeder at one point

Total species – 42 (perhaps the second highest total ever next to 2002?)

Leader only birds:

Red-necked Grebe---pair out at Freshwater Lake the first night

Dark-eyed Junco---lost bird in town near feeders the first night

Mammals:

Seal species---either Spotted or Ringed depending on who you asked!

Polar Bear---an amazing **nine** seen by those who did the optional polar bear excursion to Point Barrow