

GRAND ALASKA

**PART I
JUNE 9 – 18, 2010**

**PART II
JUNE 17 – 24, 2010**

**LEADERS:
KEVIN ZIMMER
DAVID WOLF**

COMPILED BY: KEVIN ZIMMER

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

TOUR REPORT
GRAND ALASKA
PART I: June 9–18, 2010
PART II: June 17–24, 2010

By Kevin Zimmer

Our 2010 Grand Alaska adventure began, as it always does, with a fast start out of the gate in Nome. Our first afternoon on the Teller Road yielded a Northern Shrike before we were even out of town. The bird crossed the road right in front of the lead van, carrying a prey item that looked to be as big as the bird itself! Clearly struggling, it landed for what I hoped would be enough time for the trailing van to catch up, but the “landing” was more of a touch-and-go, and this time the shrike flew hundreds of meters out of sight. We didn’t have long to be frustrated by the fast exit of the shrike, because we were soon gawking at herds of muskox, while thicket birds such as Golden-crowned Sparrow, Wilson’s Warbler, and Gray-cheeked Thrush were popping up all around us. A detour into the alpine tundra produced a grounded Golden Eagle with a full crop before we had even turned off the road. Soon, we were looking at a male Rock Ptarmigan, and then a displaying Northern Wheatear, and before long we were whipsawed between a radiant and highly territorial Red Knot and a pair of Snow Buntings leapfrogging through the boulder field. The new birds were coming both fast and furious, and for the few in our group who had carried over from our Gambell-Nome tour, it was difficult to believe that this was the same piece of real estate that had failed to yield a single bird in pea-soup fog earlier in the day. We eventually made our way to the Woolley Lagoon road, where the tundra has a decided “high Arctic” feel to it, and where dressy Black-bellied Plovers and Pacific Golden-Plovers pattered across the wildflower-carpeted flats beneath the ever watchful eyes of Long-tailed and Parasitic jaegers.

The next day found us working the Council Road, where we picked our way through myriads of shorebirds, waterfowl, and loons at Safety Lagoon, and thrilled to such gems as Gyrfalcon, Peregrine Falcon, Black Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, Wandering Tattler, Sabine’s Gull, Aleutian Tern, and Arctic Warbler. One stop served up a virtual parade of responsive warblers (Wilson’s, Yellow, Orange-crowned, Blackpoll, and Northern Waterthrush), with a territorial Alder Flycatcher and a pair of locally rare Black-capped Chickadees thrown in for good measure. We even managed scope views of a distant grizzly bear.

Day 3 found us on the Kougarok Road, where impressive scenery, big mammals, and gobs of great birds combine to produce one of the premier birding routes (and my personal favorite) in all of North America. Two mega-targets merit attention above all the others on this road. The first of these is the Bluethroat, a dazzling little Asian thrush that has established a toehold in northwestern Alaska, and one whose exuberant skylarking displays must be witnessed in person to be appreciated. As is always the case, the Bluethroat not only matched, but exceeded expectations, as we were treated to repeated aerial and perched song bouts from two males at a territorial boundary. That left the other

“Grail Bird” of the Kougarok—the Bristle-thighed Curlew. This one requires a hike, and a certain amount of luck, for in any given year there are no more than two pairs of curlews that occupy what is a pretty large dome of sprawling tundra. We had just started to level out on our ascent when Dave Wolf, who was flanking us to the north, came over the radio and said, “Check out these birds coming over.” I looked in his direction and saw three birds, clearly curlews of some sort (but then Whimbrels outnumber Bristle-thigheds on this mountain), and all headed our way. Before my binoculars could resolve any details of plumage, I could hear the clear whistled calls, “*peeeeureet peeeeureet*,” that made at least one of the birds an undeniable Bristle-thighed. “Get on the lead bird; it’s a Bristle-thighed!” I yelled. In no time, the bird was above us, and now starting to sing, all the while spiraling higher and higher into nosebleed territory. And then it tailed off and headed down slope, disappearing beyond the curvature of the dome. A similar thing had transpired days earlier on the Gambell-Nome tour, and we had rushed to the spot where we had seen the bird go down, only to come up empty. Now, we regrouped and tried again, hoping for a better outcome. We moved as quickly as the terrain would allow, but soon we were back within sight of the road, with no curlew in sight. In the words of Yogi Berra, it was “like *déjà vu* all over again!” But this time would prove to be different. I raised my binoculars to scan down slope, and was startled to see a Bristle-thighed Curlew not 50 m in front of us, its spangled upperparts blending cryptically with the dappled tundra landscape. We halted our advance and gathered around the scopes, reveling in every detail that the optics revealed. Before long, Sue had spotted a second, brighter individual about 30 m to the south of the first bird. After much time had passed, the first bird became restless and took to the air, singing as it went. The second bird stayed, and allowed us to approach even closer. Eventually we had our fill, and headed down toward the road, with the curlew still on the ground. Only once we were down slope from it did the bird take to the air, winging back up to rejoin its partner.

After scoring big with both Bluethroats and Bristle-thigheds, almost anything we did on our last morning in Nome was going to seem anticlimactic. But a last blast out the Council Road served up the hoped-for pair of Arctic Loons that often occupy a particular stretch of coastal lagoon. We enjoyed better than average studies of these rare breeders before having to head back to town for our return flight to Anchorage.

Next up was St. Paul Island (the Pribilofs). Our flight out was uneventful, and we were barely on the ground before we had tallied our first Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, one of the few land bird species on the island. But we had not come to this tiny island in the middle of the Bering Sea for land birds. We were here for the fabulous bird cliffs, where thousands of alcids, cormorants, kittiwakes, and fulmars breed cheek-to-jowl, and offer up intimate studies and countless photo-ops for camera-carrying birders. We indulged in scope-filling comparisons of Common and Thick-billed murres, Black-legged and Red-legged kittiwakes, Horned and Tufted puffins, and more cute little auklets than you could shake a stick at. Vagrants were in short supply, but we did manage a Black-headed Gull at Big Lake; a Whimbrel of the white-backed, Asiatic subspecies *variegatus* at the Salt Lagoon; a nice flock of “Aleutian” Cackling Geese; and 8 Steller’s Eiders that were hanging out in the harbor. Vagrants should always be thought of as icing on the proverbial cake—it’s the expected birds that one comes to these remote outposts for:

Tufted Puffins close enough to touch, with their golden locks wafting in the bone-chilling maritime wind; Red-faced Cormorants with their impossibly bright facial skin staring up at us from precariously placed nests that hugged the sheerest cliffs; noisy Rock Sandpipers strutting their stuff in the middle of the road, with one wing proudly pointing to the sky; armadas of Harlequin Ducks (“Lords and Ladies”) bobbing in the near-shore surf; or a Winter Wren belting out his thin, jumbled song from the top of a boulder, fiercely defiant in the face of a cacophony of seabird noise and omnipresent winds. These are the memories we take from the Pribilofs. That, and the sudden blizzard of a snowstorm that descended upon the island with our inbound plane just two hours out, and then cleared in time for the plane to land and take us back to Anchorage!

The next day was our day in Anchorage, which was also the transition day between Part I and Part II of the tour. The Part I folks enjoyed a morning split between boreal forest birds at Kincaid Park (Boreal Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and the like) and shorebirds, grebes, and waterfowl at Westchester Lagoon, where the highlights included Hudsonian Godwits, Surfbird, and some very elegant Barrow’s Goldeneyes. After lunch, we said our goodbyes to a few folks and then set about various chores, such as laundry and grocery shopping, before joining up with several new arrivals for the first night’s dinner on Part II.

Part II of our Grand Alaska tour began in the Denali region. Our drive up the Glenn Highway was scenic, with numerous opportunistic stops for birds, ranging from “Harlan’s” Hawks, Merlins, and Gray Jays teed-up atop the countless spruce trees, to handsome male Barrow’s Goldeneyes and Surf Scoters on glassy lakes, and responsive Arctic Warblers hammering out their buzzy trills from the alder thickets. Our lunch stop even produced eye-popping views of Northern Flicker and the increasingly uncommon Rusty Blackbird. Almost from the time we left Palmer, we had been on the lookout for Northern Hawk Owl, surveying gnarled spruce tops with a burning intensity. However, this was not one of those good Hawk Owl years (as we had been warned by every tour group that preceded us to Denali), a fact that was becoming increasingly apparent as our vans ate up mile after mile of owl-less taiga.

After lunch, our Hawk Owl search finally took a backseat to another owl quest, this time for a Great Gray Owl that was known to be nesting at a campground off the Glenn Highway. A lunchtime phone call informed me that the young owl was still on the nest, so it was looking increasingly like a slam-dunk. Upon arrival at the campground, the manager escorted us to the nest, which was situated in a messy ball of witches broom more than halfway up a tall spruce. “Junior” was still on the nest, although seemingly not for much longer, as evidenced by his constant hopping about, wing-flapping, and peering down as if to gauge his chances of a successful escape from the platform that was both his home and his prison. And, he wasn’t beyond expressing his impatience vocally! In fact, he kept up a continuous stream of food-begging calls that seemed certain to attract some adult supervision. But the minutes ticked by, and no adult was forthcoming. The fuzzy, soon-to-fledge youngster was certainly identifiable as a Great Gray, but didn’t have nearly the pizzazz that an adult would provide. Then again, we still had a lot of driving ahead of us. “Fifteen more minutes,” I told myself, and then we simply have to

get going. To kill time as much as anything, I taped in a Ruby-crowned Kinglet that had been singing in the background. The kinglet was on us like a flash, hopping about in agitation. After a fairly impressive demonstration of wing-flicking, the kinglet made a sudden move to a spruce about 20 feet away. Almost simultaneously, a large gray form flashed past in ghostly silence, only to disappear from sight behind the spruce. “Slowly,” I cautioned, “it’s going to be the Great Gray.” We eased down the path slightly, and there it was, festooned atop a slender snag not 15 feet above the ground! The huge head swung slowly in our direction, and the glaring yellow eyes, which appeared nearly lost against the concentric circles of the outsized facial discs, fixed us for a moment with an imperious stare. And then the great bird swiveled its head and looked the other way—aware of us, but unafraid, and more interested in something going on in the other direction. Time stood still, as we all sat transfixed by the silent intimacy of the moment, our collective breath never failing to catch in our throats each time the gray ghost cast a measured glance back in our direction. And all the while, “Junior” was now conspicuous by his silence, having ceased his incessant pleading the moment his parent came into view. All too soon (and this at least 30 minutes later), we could no longer delay the inevitable—we simply had to walk away with this spectacular predator still sitting there. Our exit route took us even closer to the bird, nearly under it in fact, and still, it sat. Had it not been for the light rain that started to fall, we might still be there. Back at the vans, we could finally exhale. It was one of those magical experiences that happens all too rarely—the chance to spend quality time with a bird of that magnitude, on its terms, without intrusion.

Back on the road now, and spirits too high for even the fruitless Hawk Owl searching to bring down, we soon hit Glennallen and turned onto the Richardson Highway. Mile after mile of taiga and mixed boreal forest rolled by, as eyeballs began to cross from scanning spruce tops. Eventually we came to Paxson, where we exited the Richardson and turned onto the paved eastern end of the famed Denali Highway. The road quickly climbed out of the taiga to treeline, and then broke onto tundra, with an amazing panorama of the Alaska Range unfolding to the north and the Wrangell Mountains spiking up to the southeast. Tangle River Inn was to be our base of operations for the next day-and-a-half, and it didn’t disappoint.

The next day we cruised the little-traveled “highway” and made several stomps across the tundra, turning up gems such as Rock and Willow ptarmigan, Long-tailed Jaeger, American Golden-Plover, Whimbrel, Harlequin Duck, and a number of other alpine species that were of particular interest to participants who had not been with us at Nome. On our last day, we drove the length of the Denali Highway, a ribbon of gravel stretching some 130 miles that provides an amazing transect of tundra and taiga habitats. Along the way we enjoyed nice comparisons of Trumpeter and Tundra swans, feisty Say’s Phoebes, a swarming colony of Bank Swallows, a great diversity of waterfowl (including a rare Blue-winged Teal), and thicket birds ranging from Arctic Warblers to Gray-cheeked Thrushes. But once again, no Northern Hawk Owl. At Cantwell, we left the gravel behind, and turned onto the George Parks Highway as we headed back to Anchorage. Our few stops en route yielded a Ring-necked Duck and a Lincoln’s Sparrow (and plenty of

brake-screeching, rubbernecking tourists who figured we had to be looking at a bear or a moose!), and a brief look at the summit of Mt. McKinley.

Our final leg saw us driving to Seward and birding en route. A stop at Potter Marsh yielded a gorgeous and confiding pair of Horned Grebes, and various stops along the scenic Seward Highway produced eye-level views of Golden-crowned Kinglets, male Pine Grosbeaks jump-snatching dandelion seeds, and an adult American Dipper feeding its recently fledged youngster. The weather gods were good to us at Seward, where sunny skies and calm seas resulted in a most pleasant boat trip through Resurrection Bay and Kenai Fjords National Park. Northwest Glacier calved plenty, Kittlitz's Murrelets allowed close approaches and gave us several good looks (both on the water and in flight), Rhinoceros Auklets were present in numbers and were relatively confiding, and some of the less common species such as Thick-billed Murre and Parakeet Auklet showed nicely. We also enjoyed a spectacular pod of resident orcas, close humpback whales, bow-riding Dall porpoises, sure-footed mountain goats, and some pretty entertaining sea otters and Steller's sea lions. Land-based birding around Seward allowed us to clean up a few missing targets, among them Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Townsend's Warbler.

A "grouse-stomp" on the drive back to Anchorage turned up a much-needed American Three-toed Woodpecker, but not the hoped for Spruce Grouse (despite much effort), which may have replaced Northern Hawk Owl as our object of scorn! Oh well, as Margaret put it (and I'm paraphrasing here), I wouldn't trade our Great Gray Owl for both of those birds!

All in all, a most congenial group of birders got to see a bunch of great birds and mammals, and we had a lot of fun doing it.

Itinerary:

6/09 - **Part I** commences with night in Anchorage

6/10 - fly to Nome, meet with leaders and participants continuing on from the **Gambell-Nome Tour**; afternoon/evening birding along the Teller Road to Woolley Lagoon

6/11 - All day birding on the Council Road, to MP 48 and back.

6/12 - All day birding on the Kougarok Road, to MP 72 and back.

6/13 - Morning excursion out the Council Road to MP 26, returning by 10:30 to hotel in time to pack, check out, and grab lunch prior to our 1:20 p.m. flight to Anchorage via Kotzebue. Night in Anchorage.

6/14 - Optional 0830-0930 bird walk around Lake Hood/Spenard. 1200 flight to St. Paul Island (the Pribilofs) via Dillingham, arriving at 1600 hours. Post-dinner excursion to the harbor, Reef Rookery, Southwest Point and Antone Lake & Slough.

6/15 - St. Paul Island. Morning at harbor, Reef Rookery, Ridgewall, and Antone Lake & Slough. Afternoon tour of church and museum, followed by excursion to North Point. Post-dinner excursion to Northeast Point (with stops at Big Lake, Polovina, Weather Bureau Lake, and Webster Lake).

6/16 - St. Paul Island (harbor, Tolstoi Point, Antone Lake and Slough, Salt Lagoon, Reef Rookery, and East Landing) for most of day, with late afternoon flight back to Anchorage.

6/17 - Morning birding in Anchorage at Westchester Lagoon and Kincaid Park. **Part I** concludes with lunch. **Part II** kicks off with dinner in Anchorage.

6/18 - Glenn Hwy. out of Anchorage to Palmer and on to Glennallen, with opportunistic stops en route, including major stops at Eureka Lodge, Tolsona Lake and Tolsona Wilderness Campground. From Glennallen we took the Richardson Hwy. north to Paxson, connecting to the Denali Hwy., which we took west to Tangle River Inn at MP 20.

6/19 - all-day birding on east end of Denali Hwy., as far west at McLaren Ridge, and as far east as Paxson, with optional post-dinner cruise over much of the same area.

6/20 - Birded the length of the Denali Hwy., west to Cantwell, then returned to Anchorage via the George Parks Hwy., with a few opportunistic stops for birds. Night in Anchorage.

6/21 - Seward Hwy. out of Anchorage, stopping at Potter Marsh before continuing on to Seward, with numerous stops en route, including Granite Creek Campground, Summit Lake, Trail River Campground, and the Bear Lake Road. Night in Seward.

6/22 - all-day boat trip to Kenai Fjords National Park, through Resurrection Bay to Northwest Fjord and the Chiswell Islands. Night in Seward.

6/23 - Seward back to Anchorage, with birding stops at Bear Lake Road, Victor Road, and Nash Road in Seward, and at Trail River Campground, Summit Lake and Granite Creek Campground en route to Anchorage. **Part II** concludes with farewell dinner in Anchorage.

6/24 - flights home or continuing on to **Barrow Extension**

Key:

A = Anchorage area (including to Girdwood on the Seward Hwy., and to Palmer on the Glenn Hwy.)

D = Denali region (from Palmer to Glennallen on the Glenn Hwy., from Glennallen to Paxson on the Richardson Hwy., the entire Denali Hwy., including Tangle River Inn and vicinity, and the return drive to Anchorage along the George Parks Hwy., from Cantwell back to Wasilla.)

K = Kenai Peninsula (from Girdwood to Seward and back, and the Kenai Fjords boat trip)

N = Nome region

P = Pribilofs (specifically St. Paul Island)

* = heard only

Birds:

Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) - **Part I** (N)

Brant (*Branta bernicla*) - **Part I** (N) {All typical western birds of the subspecies *nigricans*, formerly known as “Black Brant”}

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) - **Part I** (N, P) {The breeding birds at Nome were of the large subspecies *taverneri*; the 12 visitors at St. Paul were of the small, Aleutian-breeding subspecies, *leucopareia*. Recently split from Canada Goose.}

Canada Goose (*Branta Canadensis*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D, A)

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) - **Part II** (D) {Nice views of pairs along the Denali Hwy.}

Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D) {More of these birds hanging around the Denali Hwy. than usual.}

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, A)

American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, A)

Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) - **Part II** (D) {1 male photographed along the Denali Hwy., thanks to good spotting by Sandy! This is a rare bird on any Alaska tour.}

Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D, A)

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (D)

Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) - **Part I** (N, P?, A), **Part II** (D)
 {Almost all of the “Green-winged Teal” that we saw were of the North American breeding subspecies *carolinensis*, nuptial males of which are distinguished by the vertical white stripe at the shoulder. The only exception was at the Pribilofs, where most (all?) of the birds we saw were of the Aleutian form (dubiously distinct at the subspecific level) *nimia* of the primarily Old World breeding “Common Teal” or “Eurasian Teal”, *A. crecca*, nuptial-plumaged males of which are distinguished by the horizontal white stripe running along the edge of the folded wing, and by the more distinct pale facial “frames”. The A.O.U. treats *crecca* and *carolinensis* as conspecific, but many authorities split them. Stay tuned... }

“Eurasian Teal” or “Common Teal” (*Anas crecca nimia*) - **Part I** (P)

Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) - **Part II** (D)

Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*) - **Part I** (N, P, A), **Part II** (A, D)

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*) - **Part I** (P, A), **Part II** (D)

Steller’s Eider (*Polysticta stelleri*) - **Part I** (P) {8 non-breeders (6 females and 2 1st-year males) hanging with the Harlequin Ducks in the harbor.}

King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) - **Part I** (N, P) {The Nome birds were distant; the Pribis bird was an immature male at Antone Lake.}

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*) - **Part I** (N) {This subspecies, males of which have a bright orange-yellow bill, is quite different in appearance from eastern birds with their dull greenish bills. The Latin name is derived from a thin, black “V” framing the chin and throat of males (not easy to see in the field).}

Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) - **Part I** (N, P) {Flocks of 100+ in the Pribis are always a spectacular sight!}, **Part II** (D)

Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) - **Part II** (D) {Excellent studies!}

White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (D) {Excellent studies!}

American Scoter (*Melanitta americana*) - **Part I** (N, P) {This species has just been split by the AOU from Black Scoter, *M. nigra*, of Europe. The two forms were formerly lumped under the name of “Black Scoter”.}

Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (D)

Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) - **Part II** (D)

Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) - **Part I** (N, P) {Uncommon to rare at both locales. We had a male at Safety Lagoon on 6/11, and 3 birds in the Pribis on 6/15.}

Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D) {Stunning views of elegant males at Westchester Lagoon and a small lake along the Glenn Hwy.}

Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*) - **Part II** (K)

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (D)

Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D) {Female on a nest!}

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Arctic Loon (*Gavia arctica*) - **Part I** (N) {A pair of birds seen nicely at Safety Lagoon, in the same general area where a pair has been most springs for many years. A rare and localized presumed breeder in this part of western Alaska.}

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D, K)

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) - **Part II** (D, K)

Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) - **Part I** (N)

Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) - **Part II** (A) {A beautiful pair at Potter Marsh was a real treat!}

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, A)

Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) - **Part I** (P)

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) - **Part II** (K)

Red-faced Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax urile*) - **Part I** (P), **Part II** (K)

Pelagic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (K)

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D, A, K)

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

"Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) - **Part II** (D)

Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) - **Part I** (N)

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) - **Part II** (D) {More conspicuous than usual, with 5 different individuals in a three-day stretch.}

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*) - **Part I** (N)

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) - **Part I** (N) {Nice studies!}, **Part II** (K)

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (A)

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) - **Part I** (N) {Fabulous breeding-plumaged birds at their only known breeding site in the Nome region.}

American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) - **Part I** (N)

Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) - **Part I** (N, P, A), **Part II** (D)

Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*) - **Part II** (K)

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D)

Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incanus*) - **Part I** (N)

Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) - **Part I** (A)

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D, A)

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

"Asiatic" Whimbrel (*N. p. variegatus*) - **Part I** (P) {This Asiatic subspecies is a vagrant to our shores, and is distinguished by the white stripe up the rump and lower back (reminiscent of a dowitcher). We had 1 at the Salt Lagoon on 6/15.}

Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*) - **Part I** (N) {Fabulous walk-away looks at a pair of these rare shorebirds!}

Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemasticta*) - **Part I** (A)

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) - **Part I** (N)

Black Turnstone (*Arebarua melanocephala*) - **Part I** (N) {5+ birds on one of the larger islands in Safety Lagoon on 6/11 were behaving as if on territory. This is an uncommon to rare migrant in the Nome area, but is not known to breed.}

Surfbird (*Aphriza virgata*) - **Part I** (A)

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) - **Part I** (N) {Spectacular performance by a very territorial bird off the Teller Road!}

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) - **Part I** (N)

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*) - **Part I** (N)

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) - **Part I** (P), **Part II** (D)

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*) - **Part I** (N)

Rock Sandpiper (*Calidris ptilocnemis ptilocnemis*) - **Part I** (P) {These are the nominate subspecies, which is paler overall, with significantly more white in the wings than the other subspecies.}

Rock Sandpiper (*Calidris [p.] tschuktschorum*) - **Part I** (N) {The two territorial birds seen along the Teller Road on 6/10 were of the Seward Peninsula breeding race *tschuktschorum*. They're distinctly darker in coloration, with less white in the wings, than nominate birds, but the vocalizations are similar.}

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) - **Part I** (N)

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) - **Part I** (A)

Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II*** (D*)

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (D, K)

Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (K)

Red-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa brevirostris*) - **Part I** (P)

Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) - **Part I** (N, P)

Bonaparte's Gull (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D)

Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) - **Part I** (P) {One of the more regular vagrants recorded on Alaska trips. This bird was on Big Lake on 6/15.}

Mew Gull (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, A, K)

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) - **Part II** (D) {Birds at Nome and St. Paul were of the subspecies *vegae*, treated by some taxonomists as a distinct species, "Vega Gull". Birds seen along the Glenn and Denali Highways were of the North American subspecies *smithsonianus*. Most of the large gulls seen around Anchorage were Herring X Glaucous-winged hybrids.}

"Vega Gull" (*Larus [a.] vegae*) - **Part I** (N, P)

Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (K)

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) - **Part I** (N, P)

Aleutian Tern (*Onychoprion aleutica*) - **Part I** (N)

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, A, K)

Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (K)

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Common Murre (*Uria aalge*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (K)

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (K)

Pigeon Guillemot (*Cepphus columba*) - **Part II** (K)
Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) - **Part II** (K)
Kittlitz's Murrelet (*Brachyramphus brevirostris*) - **Part II** (K) {Several good looks at birds on the water and in flight.}
Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) - **Part II** (K)
Parakeet Auklet (*Aethia psittacula*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (K)
Least Auklet (*Aethia pusilla*) - **Part I** (P)
Crested Auklet (*Aethia cristatella*) - **Part I** (P)
Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) - **Part II** (K) {Some of the best studies of this species that we've ever had from the boat.}
Horned Puffin (*Fratercula corniculata*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (K)
Tufted Puffin (*Fratercula cirrhata*) - **Part I** (P), **Part II** (K)
Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (A)
Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*) - **Part II** (D) {We never got around to voting, but I would nominate this one for "Bird of the Trip"!}
Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) - **Part I** (N)
Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) - **Part II** (D, K)
American Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*) - **Part II** (K) {A good team effort in pinning this one down!}
Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) - **Part II** (D)
Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) - **Part II** (D)
Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) - **Part I** (N, A*), **Part II** (D, K*)
Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)
Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) - **Part I** (N)
Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) - **Part II** (D)
Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II*** (K*)
Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D, K, A)
Northwestern Crow (*Corvus caurinus*) - **Part II** (K)
Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) - **Part I** (N, P, A), **Part II** (D, K, A)
Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) - **Part II** (D)
Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, A, K)
Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (K, A)
Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, A)
Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D)
Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (K)
Chestnut-backed Chickadee (*Poecile rufescens*) - **Part II** (K)
Boreal Chickadee (*Poecile hudsonicus*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D, K)
Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (K)
Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II*** (K*)
Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*) - **Part I** (P), **Part II*** (K*) {The latest Supplement to the AOU Checklist [July 2010] splits what was called "Winter Wren" into three species: Eurasian Wren, Winter Wren, and Pacific Wren. There are three readily diagnosable subspecies groups of "Winter Wrens" occurring in North America: the eastern *hiemalis* group; the western *pacificus* group; and the Aleutian *alascensis* group. Of these, the western birds differ from the eastern ones in being much more richly buff-colored on the supercilium and underparts, whereas the Aleutian birds differ from all

others in being distinctly longer billed and larger. Recently published molecular and vocal evidence shows that the *pacificus* and *alascensis* groups comprise a separate species (= Pacific Wren) that should be treated as distinct from the eastern *hiemalis* group (= Winter Wren), which is apparently more closely related to Eurasian “Winter Wrens” (= Eurasian Wren). The two North American species even contact one another in the Canadian Rockies without evidence of interbreeding. The island populations from the Bering Sea & Aleutians, although even more distinct morphologically, are genetically close to *pacificus*, and will, at least for the present, be included with that group. There are lots of different subspecies involved, and it is still unclear how the taxonomic dust will settle, but tuck that Pribilof’s bird away – it could eventually be treated (along with the Aleutian populations) as yet another species distinct from *pacificus*.}

American Dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*) - **Part II** (K)

Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (K)

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) - **Part II** (D, K)

Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D) {These usually late-arriving breeders showed up early this year, and were present in numbers at both Nome and the Denali region, as well as along the Glenn Hwy.}

Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) - **Part I** (N) {Fabulous studies of sensational skylarking and perched males.}

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) - **Part I** (N)

Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Swainson’s Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) - **Part II** (D*, K)

Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) - **Part II** (D*, K)

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (A, D, K)

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) - **Part II** (D, K)

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (A)

Eastern Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla tschutschensis*) - **Part I** (N) {Formerly treated as part of the “Yellow Wagtail” complex, some populations of which are now treated as distinct species.}

American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens pacificus*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II*** (D*)

Orange-crowned Warbler (*Oreothlypis celata*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, K)

Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D, A, K)

Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, K)

Townsend’s Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*) - **Part II** (K)

Blackpoll Warbler (*Dendroica striata*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Northern Waterthrush (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Wilson’s Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D, K*)

American Tree Sparrow (*Spizella arborea*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, K, A)

“Red Fox-Sparrow” (*Passerella iliaca zaboria*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D) {We saw two very different types of Fox Sparrows, including very red birds at Nome {subspecies *zaboria* which is very similar to eastern *iliaca*} and very sooty ones at Seward {subspecies *sinuosa*, which is part of the *fuliginosa* group}. Published molecular studies have advocated the splitting of the Fox Sparrow into as many as four separate species, and there are certainly substantial differences in morphology and voice (both songs and

calls) between the various populations. So far, the A.O.U. checklist committee remains unconvinced, but keep your eye on this complex for possible splits.}

“Sooty Fox-Sparrow” (*Passerella [i.] fuliginosa sinuosa*) - **Part II** (K)

Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) - **Part II** (K)

Lincoln’s Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii*) - **Part II** (D, K)

White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (D, K)

Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (K)

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D, K)

Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*) - **Part I** (N, P), **Part II** (D)

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivialis*) - **Part I** (N, P)

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) - **Part II** (A)

Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*) - **Part I** (N), **Part II** (D)

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis umbrina*) - **Part I** (P) {This Pribilofs subspecies is distinguished from others in the complex by its much larger size and by the more extensive gray on the sides of the face.}

Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*) - **Part II** (K)

Common Redpoll (*Spinus [Carduelis] flammea*) - **Part I** (N, A), **Part II** (A, D, K)

Hoary Redpoll (*Spinus [Carduelis] hornemanni*) - **Part I** (N)

Pine Siskin (*Spinus [Carduelis] pinus*) - **Part I** (A), **Part II** (D, K)

Mammals:

Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*) - K (The first time that I can remember seeing a bat on an Alaska tour!)

Arctic Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus parryii*) - N, D

Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) - D, K

Vole sp. - D

American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) - N

Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*)- D

Collared Pika (*Ochotona collaris*)- D

North American Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*) - D (leader only)

Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*) - D, K

Alaska Hare (*Lepus othus*) - N (leader only)

Arctic Fox (*Alopex lagopus*) - P

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) - D

Grizzly (Brown Bear) (*Ursus arctos*) - N

Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris*) - K

Steller’s Sea Lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*) - P, K

Northern Fur Seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*) - P

Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) - P, K

Dall’s Sheep (*Ovis dalli*) - A

Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) - K

Caribou (Reindeer) (*Rangifer tarandus*) - N

Moose (*Alces alces*) - D, K

Muskox (*Ovibos moschatus*)- N

Dall’s Porpoise (*Phocoenoides dalli*) - K

Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)- K
Orca (Killer Whale) (*Orcinus orca*) - K

Total = 25 species