

ALASKA: BARROW EXTENSION

JUNE 25 - 27, 2005

LEADERS:
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KEVIN ZIMMER

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Barrow, Alaska extension

June 25 - 27, 2005

Leaders: Barry Zimmer & Kevin Zimmer

Itinerary:

June 25 - early morning flight from Anchorage to Barrow; Freshwater Lake Road, Gaswell Road, Point Barrow (31 species)

June 26 - Gaswell Road to washout point, Freshwater Lake Road, Point Barrow (33 species; 38 total)

June 27 morning departure to Anchorage (38 total species)

Summary: We had a fantastic trip to Barrow this year with the best eider showing in some time. Spectacled Eider has been a difficult bird for nearly a decade now and Steller's has undergone a rather drastic decline over the past five years or so. This year we had an astonishing 15 Steller's our first afternoon along the Freshwater Lake road with excellent views of several pairs. Later that day we ventured out the Gaswell Road and walked up to within 50 feet of two male and one female Spectacled Eiders. The next day yielded an additional 7 Spectacleds, including five males in one group. It was great to see these two specialty birds of Barrow having a good year for a change. Our second day also produced a pair of Kings (plus an additional lone female) on a tundra pond that allowed close approach. We saw several flocks of Kings on our late night polar bear excursions along Point Barrow, but these were our only ones on the tundra. One male Common along Point Barrow our last night resulted in an eider sweep, and left many pondering which was the most spectacular eider of the fabulous group! We also did well with Snowy Owls which had crashed last year along with the lemmings. I believe last year's trip only saw one or two Snowys. We had about 15 individuals including a couple right next to the road. Other Barrow highlights included a Yellow-billed Loon along Point Barrow for some, and the regular shorebird fare with abundant displaying Pectorals, stunning Red Phalaropes on most of the ponds, and a Baird's Sandpiper on a nest.

Birds:

Red-throated Loon

Pacific Loon

Yellow-billed Loon nice breeding-plumaged bird off Plover Point on second polar bear trip

Tundra Swan

Greater White-fronted Goose

Brant

Northern Pintail

Northern Shoveler uncommon in Barrow

Greater Scaup

Common Eider one seen along Point Barrow on second polar bear trip

King Eider fabulous study of three along the Gaswell Road, plus several flocks along Point Barrow on polar bear trips

Spectacled Eider a total of ten seen (the best trip for this declining species in years) with amazingly close walk away views of three along the Gaswell Road

Steller's Eider a total of 17 seen; as with Spectacled it was the best year for this species in at least five years

Long-tailed Duck common

Red-breasted Merganser

American Golden-Plover beautiful breeding-plumaged birds

Semipalmated Plover
Long-billed Dowitcher
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling uncommon
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper one sitting on a nest
Pectoral Sandpiper displaying and hooting birds all over the tundra!
Dunlin
Red-necked Phalarope
Red Phalarope next to Pectoral perhaps the most common shorebird here!
Pomarine Jaeger rather scarce indicative of last year's lemming crash
Parasitic Jaeger
Long-tailed Jaeger
Glaucous Gull
Arctic Tern
Black Guillemot excellent views on each of the polar bear trips
Snowy Owl about 15 seen including two very close to the road; a good rebound from last year's crash
Common Raven
Hoary Redpoll poorly seen for the most part
Lapland Longspur
Snow Bunting common

total species - 38

Mammals:

Spotted Seal