

Alaska – 19-29 June 2019



19 June

This was my travel day. I left Des Moines at 6:55 a.m. and arrived in Anchorage at 11:45 a.m. local time. I made a quick afternoon visit to Potter Marsh but was unable to relocate the Falcated Duck. [mostly clear, temperature 52-67°F, wind light and variable]

20 June

I birded Anchorage and Potter Marsh through 7:30 a.m. and enjoyed good looks at the long-staying male Falcated Duck. After returning to town I ate breakfast, transferred to the airport, checked in for my flight, and eventually departed at noon. We stopped in Dillingham for fuel (1:30-2 p.m.) then continued to St. Paul where we arrived at 4 p.m. We checked into the King Eider Hotel (conveniently right *in* the airport) then met for a short briefing with Saint Paul Tour and then headed to dinner at Trident. The three guides were Marc Kramer, Sullivan (Sulli) Gibson, and Claudia Cavazos. Dinner was 5-6:30 p.m. and consisted of a buffet (steak, rice, salmon, fish, salad bar, and cookies and cake). After dinner we birded the harbor and saw Harlequin Duck, Red-faced Cormorant, and many of the common local breeding birds. After dinner our group of AOS birders (7 of us) went with Sulli to look for eagles (including a White-tailed Eagle; no luck) followed by stops at several lakes and eventually the harbor. [clear, temp 54-76°F, wind W 5-10 mph in Anchorage; partly to mostly cloudy, temp 49-53°F, wind W 10-15 mph in St. Paul]

21 June

Today we met at 7 a.m. and drove to breakfast (a buffet with vegetable omelet, rice, bacon, sausage, waffle with strawberries, juice and coffee) and then started birding. Our morning stop was at Reef Point and cliffs just south of Saint Paul to look at breeding seabirds. The weather was overcast, breezy, and misty so viewing was a little challenging. But we moved along the cliff until 11 a.m. and enjoyed many great photography opportunities! Seabirds included Red-faced Cormorant, many Thick-billed and a few Common murre, Parakeet, Least, and Crested auklets, Horned and Tufted puffins, Northern Fulmar, and both kittiwakes. Careful scanning offshore produced Short-tailed Shearwater, a pair of Ancient Murrelets, and a pair of Rhinoceros Auklets, the latter possibly prospecting for a nesting colony. We also had a couple of cooperative Pacific Wrens singing on the cliffs. The water below the colony had a few patrolling Steller's Sea Lions and Northern Fur Seals. At about 11 a.m. we left the cliffs and walked west to a viewing area for the Northern Fur Seals. We spent about a half hour watching some young males displaying. The bay held a few birds that included Harlequin Ducks and 3 lingering Black Scoters. When we were done we headed back into town for lunch (buffet with fish, fried clams and shrimp, rice, mixed veggies, salad bar, fruit, cookies and cake, and juice).

After lunch we drove to Antone Slough for a short walk to look for stray shorebirds. The birding was a little slow although the lake held single pairs of Eurasian and American wigeon and we found a Semipalmated Plover nest with 4 eggs. Our next stop was a high spot to search for soaring eagles now that the weather had cleared a bit. Almost immediately we saw one soaring far to the north, and after a while drove to Marunich to walk the Bering Sea shoreline and watch the bluff to our west. A moderate fog appeared, so the eagle search was fruitless. However, the beach held many Rock Sandpipers and kittiwakes of both species plus Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Short-tailed Shearwaters offshore, and other expected species. It was a very pleasant hike that ended at 5 p.m. From here we returned to town for dinner (buffet with baked fish, fried chicken, beef stew, rice, corn on the cob, fruit, cookies and cake, and juice). After dinner we returned to the high spot to scan for eagles, but it was overcast with a light fog and we saw nothing. We then made a quick stop at Weather Bureau Lake where we saw the continuing female Bufflehead and Horned Grebe plus large numbers of loafing Red-legged Kittiwakes. On the back side of the lake we parked and walked the wetlands where we saw Green-winged Teal (hybrids), a Northern Pintail brood, many Red-necked Phalaropes, and cooperative displaying Snow Buntings. At about 8 p.m. we called it a day and returned to the hotel. [overcast, temperature 45-53°F, wind W 10-20 mph, light mist and fog most of morning]

22 June

Today we again met at 7 a.m. and drove to breakfast (a buffet with scrambled eggs, rice, bacon, sausage, biscuits with gravy, juice and coffee) and then started birding. Our first was Ridge Wall where there is a large seabird nesting colony along with great views of the ocean. The colony was quite active with Red-faced Cormorant, Thick-billed and Common murre, Parakeet, Least, and Crested (on ocean only) auklets, Horned and Tufted puffins, Northern Fulmar, and both kittiwakes. The ocean had a few Short-tailed Shearwaters and a distant loon sp. We departed at 9:30 and drove to nearby Southwest Point where there was another seabird

nesting colony. We saw more of the same here, except that there was a good movement of passing Short-tailed Shearwaters (200+) and a lone Wandering Tattler. We stayed along this cliff until 10:45 a.m. when we drove a short distance to Antone Lake. We scanned the main lake and were disappointed that the unusual ducks from yesterday had departed, although we had close looks at Least Auklets nesting in the boulders along the ocean shoreline. It was now almost lunchtime, so we returned to Trident for the lunch buffet (fried haddock, chili brats and hot dogs, crab curry, rice, fruit, salad bar, and dessert).

After lunch we hiked along Polovina Hill in hopes of seeing the eagles, but were disappointed. We then headed for Northeast Point and a short stop at Big Lake produced a juvenile Glaucous Gull. Webster Lake held a few ducks that included a female Red-breasted Merganser. We then walked across the road and scanned the ocean from atop a high dune. The ocean was surprisingly active with 2 groups of King Eiders (totaling 20 individuals), Harlequin Ducks, 200+ Short-tailed Shearwaters, and a fly-by Least Sandpiper. As we were scanning we received a call at 3 p.m. about a White Wagtail in town, so we quickly packed up for the chase. We spent the two hours before dinner scanning Salt Lagoon, parts of town, and some nearby beaches for the wagtail without luck. A highlight was seeing two Red-throated Loons on the ocean just north of town. We also enjoyed good looks at a banded adult Black-legged Kittiwake in the St. Paul Harbor (yellow band with K7 in black). At 5:30 p.m. we headed into town for dinner (baked haddock, corned beef with cabbage, rice, cooked carrots, salad bar, cookies and pie for dessert). After dinner we followed up on an earlier sighting of the eagles at Lake Hill, but were unable to relocate them. We then visited a couple of lakes and a quarry before returning to town for one last look for the wagtail. The birding was very slow with more of the expected species and we made it to the hotel by 8:45 p.m. [overcast, temperature 46-52°F, wind SW 5-10 mph, intermittent light rain and fog]

23 June

Today we again met for breakfast at Trident at 7 a.m. (scrambled eggs, rice, bacon, sausage, French toast with strawberries, fruit, orange juice and coffee). After eating we headed straight to Northeast Point and a nearby hill to look for a Common Rosefinch found the day before. After about a half hour of searching we relocated the bird, a first-spring male, and it even sang occasionally. We also enjoyed nice views of the surrounding ocean and many loafing Northern Fur Seals along the shoreline. From here we headed back south and walked Antone Slough, which was surprisingly slow. But from the road we found a large herd of ~150 Reindeer (introduced) on the slopes to the east. We then decided to take one more look for the White Wagtail found the day before at Salt Lagoon, but were unsuccessful. But we did find the continuing female King Eider, several Harlequin Ducks, and a female Common Goldeneye. With the remaining time before lunch we made a quick stop at Reef Cliff to enjoy the nesting seabirds one more time. The seabirds were good, but an onshore breeze from the southwest was pushing hundreds of Short-tailed Shearwaters close to shore and some serious ocean watching turned up a passing dark morph Parasitic Jaeger. At 12:15 p.m. we returned to Trident for lunch (spaghetti with meat sauce, fried fish, rice, mixed vegetables, fruit, salad bar, and dessert). After lunch we returned to the hotel for final packing, turned in our room keys, and checked our bags for the

return flight to Anchorage. We finished these tasks a little after 1 p.m. and decided to return to Lake Hill for one last try for the eagles. Weather conditions seemed good, but we saw very few birds and no eagles. We had time for a quick return visit to Salt Lagoon (nothing of note) and a short stop at Pumphouse Lake (also nothing of note) before arriving back at the airport at 3:45 p.m. We finally boarded the flight back to Anchorage at 5 p.m. and arrived at a little before 8 p.m. after a smooth flight. [overcast, temperature 46-50°F, wind SW 5-10 mph but increasing throughout day, intermittent mist and fog in the morning]

24-28 June

This was the annual meeting of the American Ornithological Society in Anchorage, so I was mostly occupied with academic tasks. However, I did bird Potter Slough on 25 June and also made a few trips to local Anchorage parks.

29 June

This was my travel day back to Iowa. Everything went smoothly and I was home by 4 p.m.

For more information, please contact: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management, 339 Science Hall II, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; E-mail: cootjr@iastate.edu

Birds (66 species)

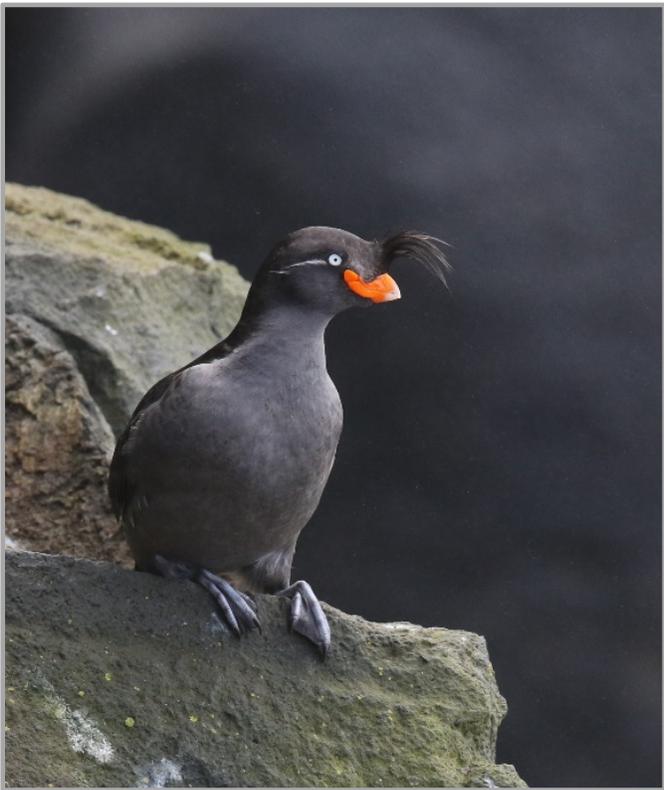
Cackling Goose
Canada Goose
Trumpeter Swan
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
Falcated Duck
Eurasian Wigeon
American Wigeon
Mallard
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Ring-necked Duck
Greater Scaup
King Eider
Harlequin Duck
Long-tailed Duck
Bufflehead
Common Goldeneye
Horned Grebe
Red-necked Grebe
Rock Pigeon
Sandhill Crane
Semipalmated Plover
Killdeer
Rock Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Wandering Tattler
Lesser Yellowlegs
Red-necked Phalarope

Parasitic Jaeger
Common Murre
Thick-billed Murre
Ancient Murrelet
Parakeet Auklet
Least Auklet
Crested Auklet
Rhinoceros Auklet
Horned Puffin
Tufted Puffin
Black-legged Kittiwake
Red-legged Kittiwake
Mew Gull
Western Gull
Herring Gull
Glaucous-winged Gull
Glaucous Gull
Red-faced Cormorant
Pelagic Cormorant
Bald Eagle
White-tailed Eagle
Black-billed Magpie
Common Raven
Tree Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
American Robin
European Starling
House Finch
Common Rosefinch
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch
Lapland Longspur

Snow Bunting
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco

Mammals (7 species)

Harbor Seal
Northern Fur Seal
Steller's Sea Lion
Arctic Fox
Moose
Caribou
Pribilof Shrew



Clockwise from top left: Falcated Duck, Northern Fulmar, Parakeet Auklet, and Crested Auklet.



Clockwise from top left: Horned Puffin, Common Rosefinch, Tufted Puffin, and Least Auklet.