



## Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022



**Spruce Grouse**

This tour offers participants a chance to visit four very different areas of our largest state. We will spend four days exploring the sea coast and tundra around the hard scrabble town of Nome, where birds like Red-necked Stint, Aleutian Tern, Northern Wheatear, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, Arctic Warbler and Bluethroat lend the avifauna a decidedly Siberian flavor. Dare I say that over the course of our time in Nome, the spectacular will become mundane? Long-tailed Jaegers, Arctic Terns and Willow Ptarmigan are just three examples of birds that will be seen with such regularity that they will eventually become a distraction from other less abundant target species. One of these target species will be Bristle-thighed Curlew, one of the world's rarest birds, with an estimated population of only around 10,000 individuals. The only known accessible breeding site for this species is on a dome ridge about 70 miles north of Nome and we will devote one entire day traveling to this area to search for curlews among the more common Whimbrel. Early June is a peak time for migrants to be moving along the coastal areas near Nome and past trips have recorded Yellow-billed and Arctic loons, Bar-tailed Godwit, Slaty-backed Gull, Red Phalarope and Spectacled Eider among the more common and expected species. We will spend 4 nights in Nome, which will allow us plenty of time to explore all of Nome's most productive areas more than once and to take advantage of the ever changing component of birds that are present at this season. We will also visit Kenai Fjords National Park, with its breathtaking vistas and scenery, where we will take an all-day boat trip to Northwest Fjord in search of seabirds like Kittlitz's and Marbled murrelets, Red-faced Cormorant, Pigeon Guillemot, Tufted and Horned puffins and mammals like Orca, Humpback Whale, Sea Otter and Steller's Sea Lion. In the spruce stands outside of Seward we can look for more southerly species like Townsend's Warbler, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Pine Grosbeak, Varied Thrush and Red-breasted Nuthatch, as well as test our sparrow skills with unfamiliar races of Song (rufina) and Fox (unalaschensis). We will also stop at a well-stocked feeding station at the home of a truly unique, native Alaskan character, where Rufous Hummingbirds frequently visit. In the Anchorage area the boreal forests are home to species like Bohemian Waxwing, Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee and American Three-toed Woodpecker.



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St. Paul Island, part of the Pribilofs island group, lies in the middle of the Bering Sea. St. Paul is famous for its nesting seabirds and annually hosts thousands of Parakeet, Least and Crested auklets, Tufted and Horned puffins, Northern Fulmar and Black-legged Kittiwakes in noisy cliff colonies just a stone's throw from observers. Sprinkled among these hordes will be a few Red-legged Kittiwakes and Red-faced Cormorants adding a bit of spice to the spectacle. In addition to the nesting cliffs, St. Paul harbors many other interesting birds including Rock Sandpiper (very common), King Eider, Harlequin Duck and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. Tufted Duck, Bar-tailed Godwit and Brambling are annual visitors and if winds are from the west any number of Asian vagrants can be make an unexpected appearance. Historically, the end of May has been one of the premier times to find Asian shorebirds and passerines on St. Paul with Eyebrowed Thrush, Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper and Common Cuckoo being examples of regular visitors. The final portion of the tour will take us far above the Arctic Circle to Utqiagvik (formerly known as Barrow), America's northernmost town, where for 67 days during the summer months the sun never sets. Utqiagvik is an experience, a true frontier town on the edge of the Alaskan wilderness surrounded by the icy waters of the Bering Sea and endless rolling tundra pocked with wetlands carved out by the constant shifting and melting of ice and its runoff. It is a fascinating landscape and somewhat otherworldly to those of us generally confined to the lower 48. It is also a harsh and unforgiving place with brutal temperature extremes, violent storms, endless darkness during the winter and endless daylight during the summer. The waters of the Beaufort Sea are often still ice-covered in mid-June and the winds off of the ice can make it feel more like December to the non-initiated. However, amidst this harsh and brutal land, two of the Far North's rarest birds can be found: Steller's and Spectacled eiders. Sadly, the numbers of both of these species has been rapidly dwindling and they are no longer as easy to find as they once were. Past trips have been successful though, and we hope that that trend will continue in 2022. In addition to the target eiders, Barrow has much more to offer the visiting birder. Colorful Red Phalaropes seem to be on every puddle and pond, a small number of Buff-breasted Sandpipers still perform their elaborate courtship ritual and the soft booming of displaying Pectoral Sandpipers is an unforgettable sight and sound. Pomarine Jaegers replace the Long-tailed and Parasitic variety that are so common further south and it's always possible to find a Slaty-backed Gull among the hordes of Glaucous Gulls. King Eider and Long-tailed Ducks can be abundant, Snowy Owls nest on the tundra outside of town and Yellow-billed Loons occasionally turn up in near shore waters. Utqiagvik is always exciting and never boring. The combination of habitats visited throughout the tour ensures a lengthy bird list that is certain to be filled with many life birds for everyone involved. That, coupled with the spectacular and unforgettable landscapes that will be the daily backdrop for our travels, is sure to make this trip one of the most memorable you have ever experienced.

*Muskox*





# Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

## DAILY ITINERARY

### May 29, Day 1, Arrival in Anchorage

Participants should plan to arrive in Anchorage today by late afternoon. We will plan to meet for an orientation session in our hotel at 6:30 PM and then have dinner together. The hotel is within walking distance of a large lake that attracts a nice variety of waterfowl. The mix of birds on the lake changes rapidly, but regular visitors include Greater Scaup, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-throated Loon and Red-necked Grebe. Since it doesn't get dark until 11:30 PM, anyone wishing to get an early start on their bird list can spend some time at the shore after dinner. Night in Anchorage.

### May 30, Day 2, Anchorage area

We'll begin this morning searching for Spruce Grouse in a large forested tract of land only about 15 minutes from the hotel. Over the years we have usually been able to find them although they are inconspicuous and never guaranteed. Later we will visit Potter Marsh, a vast wetland area south of the city where a terrific variety of waterfowl, gulls and terns is present. This is a great place to get close up views of Arctic Tern, Red-necked Phalarope, Mew Gull and Trumpeter Swan, as well as a nice mix of more common waterfowl. If time allows we will also visit Westchester Lagoon where Red-necked Grebe is abundant and there are sometimes Hudsonian Godwits present. There is more to do in the Anchorage area than we could possibly fit into a single day, so we will certainly not lack for ideas and opportunities. This day was added to the schedule as a cushion in the event that anyone is delayed in their arrival. We will be flying to St. Paul Island early tomorrow morning and anyone not arriving on time would miss that important part of the trip. Night in Anchorage.

*Black-backed Woodpecker*



*Trumpeter Swan*





# Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

## DAILY ITINERARY (cont)

### May 31-June 1, Days 3-4, St. Paul Island

After breakfast we will take the shuttle to the airport for a late morning flight to St. Paul on the Pribilof Islands, a small formation of volcanic outcrops in the Bering Sea. Depending upon the flight schedules which change often and are also affected by weather, we will have one and a half to two full days to explore St. Paul, the largest island in the complex. The main attraction here are the nesting seabird cliffs where we will be able to stand in close proximity to hundreds of nesting Tufted and Horned Puffins, Least, Crested and Parakeet Auklets, Common and Thick-billed Murres, Northern Fulmar and Black-legged Kittiwake. Sprinkled among them are a few Red-faced Cormorants and perhaps St. Paul's most famous breeding resident, the Red-legged Kittiwake, a species that can be seen found nowhere else in North America. The seabird cliffs are a spectacle and the chance to stand within a few yards of these birds and observe their breeding behaviors is an opportunity that few people on earth receive. The interior of the island is a rather barren moonscape consisting of flat grassy wetlands and patches of tundra. Land birds here are scarce, but those that are present are exciting for birders confined to more southerly latitudes. Rock Sandpipers are common breeders on the island and Pacific Wren, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch are generally conspicuous and easy to see. In some years, McKay's Buntings nest on St. Paul and if they are present we should be able to see them with the help of local guides. In the offshore waters we may find King and Common eiders, Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck and an assortment of other diving ducks. Making our time on the island more intriguing is the possibility of turning up rare Asian strays. St. Paul is well-known for hosting some of North America's rarest birds each spring and our visit will fall during the window when these rarities are most likely to be present. Some of the more frequently recorded visitors to St. Paul in late May are Common and Oriental Cuckoo, Eyebrowed Thrush, Olive-backed Pipit, Brambling, Common Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit, Wood Sandpiper and Common Snipe, however in late May almost anything could show up if the weather conditions are favorable. Obviously any of these would be thrilling, but even without them a trip to St. Paul will leave an indelible memory etched upon your psyche. The harsh and relentless arctic winter will be giving way to the tundra's brief flirtation with summer when alpine meadows explode with colorful wildflowers and all creatures are in a frenzy to complete their reproductive duties before the icy darkness once again takes hold. The polar summer is cause for celebration and we will have a rare opportunity to witness and participate in this annual arctic rite of passage. Nights on St. Paul Island.

### June 2, Day 5, Return to Anchorage

After a final day on St. Paul we will catch a late afternoon flight back to Anchorage where we will transfer to our hotel. Participants should be aware that the unpredictable Arctic weather often disrupts flights schedules to and from St. Paul, so several buffer days have been built into our itinerary to minimize the possibility of us being inconvenienced and having to sacrifice any of our planned activities during the tour. Night in Anchorage.



# Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

## DAILY ITINERARY (cont)

### June 3-4, Days 6-7, Glenn Highway & Anchorage area

Due to the chance of delayed flights to and from St. Paul, these two days in the Anchorage area have been added to the tour. Even if we arrive in Anchorage as scheduled the previous evening, it will be a short night and adding this cushion will guard against the possibility of interference with the Seward portion of the trip as well as give us some time to explore a few places we would otherwise not have time to visit. On the first morning, we will drive about 2 hours north of Anchorage on the Glenn Highway to search for Northern Hawk-Owl and other boreal denizens. An excellent and usually productive stretch of hawk-owl habitat can be found between MP 119 and 135 on the Glenn Highway and we will work this area looking for this often photogenic owl. We'll eat lunch at a small family owned lodge that grows its own produce in an elaborate greenhouse set-up and serves some of the best food on the entire trip. The boreal forests along the Glenn Highway also will likely be our best chance to see Bohemian Waxwing and White-winged Crossbills, although both are difficult at this time of year. On the second day we will visit an area where a major forest fire occurred several years ago. Though it is now an old burn it still is a good place for American Three-toed Woodpecker and sometimes Black-backed Woodpecker. Other birds present here include Boreal Chickadee, Orange-crowned Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Red-breasted Nuthatch and occasionally Spruce Grouse. On the drive back to Anchorage there are excellent places to look for Golden-crowned Sparrow, Townsend's Solitaire, Harlequin Duck, Pacific Loon and other good birds. And if people feel like hiking a bit we can stop at Hatcher Pass to look for White-tailed Ptarmigan if the snow isn't too deep. Nights in Anchorage.

**Red-necked Grebe**





# Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

## DAILY ITINERARY (cont)

### June 5, Day 8, Anchorage to Seward

After breakfast we'll start the 2.5 hour drive south from Anchorage to Seward. We'll make another brief stop at Potter Marsh to see if anything has changed since our previous visit. The birds turn over quickly at this time of year, so checking this site more than once can prove worthwhile. Proceeding south we will follow the shore of Turnagain Arm, traveling on what is arguably one of the most scenic drives in all of North America. Bald Eagles are abundant here and we may see 50-75 between Anchorage and Seward! The steep rocky cliffs on the east side of the highway are home to Dall Sheep and if we are lucky we'll see some that have come down close to the road to feed. We'll take our time and make frequent stops at wetlands and in the humid evergreen forests that begin about an hour north of Seward. Here we can explore an endless selection of trails and campgrounds where boreal species like American Three-toed Woodpecker, Spruce Grouse, Northern Goshawk and Boreal Chickadee roam the woodlands, Lesser Yellowlegs perform their aerial courtship maneuvers above the spruce stands and American Dippers cavort in the rushing streams. Upon reaching Seward we will visit Lowell Point where large concentrations of Harlequin Ducks often congregate along with a few Barrow's Goldeneye. We'll also check the harbor area in Seward where Pigeon Guillemot and Black-legged Kittiwake are common and are sometimes joined by a few Marbled Murrelet. Night in Seward.

### June 6, Day 9, All Day Boat trip in Kenai Fjords NP

Today will be spent on the water cruising the dramatic and dazzling coastlines of Resurrection Bay and the open water around the Chiswell Islands. The splendid scenery on this cruise is enough to justify the trip, but the birds and mammals we will see just might relegate the vistas to the realm of afterthought.

**Scenery along Turnagain Arm**





# Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

## DAILY ITINERARY (cont)

Pods of Killer Whales are seen frequently on this trip, as are lesser numbers of Humpback Whales. Common seabirds will include Tufted and Horned puffins, Pigeon Guillemot and Common Murre with lesser chances for Rhinoceros Auklet and Ancient Murrelet. Along the rocky shores we may find a few Black Oystercatchers and Bald Eagles, and Black-legged Kittiwake and Glaucous-winged Gulls will be abundant. In areas where glacial runoff creates swift, unnatural currents we will look for the uncommon Kittlitz's Murrelet, a species that is declining and increasingly difficult to find. If it is a calm day we may also visit the Chiswell Islands where nesting Parakeet and Least auklets and Tufted and Horned puffins are common, although the views are nothing like what one has on St. Paul. After a full day on the water we'll return to Seward and enjoy a welcome dinner of fresh seafood at one of the town's harbor view restaurants. Night in Seward.

### June 7, Day 10, Seward to Anchorage

We'll begin today with some spruce forest birding outside of Seward, focusing on species we have not yet seen. Pacific Wren can be found in small numbers near Seward, but there will also be more chances to see Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Hairy Woodpecker, Rufous Hummingbird, Varied Thrush, Orange-crowned and Wilson's warblers, Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill and Fox Sparrow. The remainder of the day will be spent driving back to Anchorage with a planned late afternoon arrival that will give everyone time to reorganize their luggage before our flight to Nome the following morning. Along the way we will look for any species we missed on the drive down and take plenty of time to stop for photographs of the sensational panoramic vistas that will present themselves at every curve in the road. Night in Anchorage.





## Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

### DAILY ITINERARY (cont)

#### June 8-11, Days 11-14, Anchorage to Nome & the Nome Area

After breakfast, we'll transfer to the airport for a flight to Nome where we'll spend the next 4 days exploring the three main roads that provide access to the tundra and coastal areas surrounding this fascinating frontier town. Our daily schedule here will be flexible determined by what is being seen during our visit. One certainty is that we will devote an entire day to drive 75 miles north from Nome on the Kougarok Road to the only known North American nesting site of the near-mythical Bristle-thighed Curlew. In addition to the long drive, seeing this bird requires a rugged uphill hike over uneven terrain to reach the dome where they breed, but for those willing to take on the challenge, it is one of birding's most rewarding experiences. Even without the curlew, a day of birding on the Kougarok is always worth the time and effort. Willow thickets along the Nome River harbor Bluethroat and Arctic Warbler and rocky areas can produce Rock Ptarmigan and Northern Wheatear. Nesting raptors include Gyrfalcon (uncommon), Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier and Golden Eagle. Other expected birds include Gray-cheeked Thrush, Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warbler and Common and Hoary Redpoll. Both the Teller and Council Roads also provide fabulous birding opportunities with chances for Willow Ptarmigan, King Eider, Northern Wheatear, Red-necked Stint, both American and Pacific Golden-Plover, Thick-billed Murre, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, Long-tailed and Parasitic Jaeger, Arctic and Aleutian Tern, Merlin, Northern Shrike, Golden-crowned, American Tree and Fox Sparrows, Red-necked Phalarope, Red-throated and Pacific Loon, Harlequin Duck, Lapland Longspur, Short-eared Owl and much more. The birding here is always exciting and one never knows what might be around the next bend. Past trips here have produced Yellow-billed and Arctic loons, Ivory, Sabine's and Slaty-backed gulls and Spectacled Eider, and in 2019 we were among the lucky few to see a Ross's Gull! Semipalmated Sandpipers are common breeders on the tundra around Nome and it is delightful to see these shorebirds performing their elaborate courtship flights. It is quite a difference from seeing them feeding or resting on usually distant mudflats on the east coast during migratory periods and will give you a renewed sense of appreciation for how far these tiny birds travel and the conditions they endure in order to reproduce. Some years a White Wagtail is present somewhere around Nome, and depending upon the weather and winds, Asian strays show up as well. In recent years some of the birds that have been found in Nome in June include Great Knot, Gray Wagtail, Red Phalarope and Red-throated Pipit. Clearly this is a place where practically anything could show up. The tundra around Nome is also a great place to see large mammals including Muskox, Grizzly Bear and Moose. Nome is an amazing experience biologically and culturally and when our time there comes to an end you surely won't be ready to leave. Nights in Nome.

#### June 12, Day 15, Flight from Nome to Anchorage

After a final few hours in Nome, we will catch a flight back to Anchorage where we will have an afternoon to rest, do laundry and prepare for the trip to Utqiagvik, the final leg of our adventure. Night in Anchorage.



# Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

## DAILY ITINERARY (cont)

### June 13-14, Days 16-17, Anchorage to Utqiagvik

The flight to Utqiagvik (formerly known as Barrow) departs quite early, so we will shuttle to the airport and grab some breakfast there after passing through security. Upon arrival in Utqiagvik we will pickup our van, drop our luggage at the hotel and immediately begin exploring the few short roads leading from town into the surrounding tundra. This is a unique ecosystem quite unlike any of the previous venues on the tour. Situated more than 300 miles above the Arctic Circle at more than 71 degrees north, Utqiagvik indeed sits at the top of the world....or at least the top of the world we can easily access in North America! The topography is flat and barren and pock marked with many shallow pools, a result of melting ice and standing water unable to seep through the permafrost. This is a land of extremes where the sun isn't seen for 65 consecutive days during the winter! Fortunately, during our visit the opposite extreme will prevail and we will have essentially 24 hours of daylight. The weather here can be harsh, even in mid-June, and temperatures in the 20's with windy conditions are routine. Though this may sound like an inhospitable environment for any living creature, it is home to a highly sought after suite of birds that use this alien environment to breed and raise their young. Barrow is famous to birders as "the place" to see eiders in breeding plumage and the timing of our visit will give us excellent chances to see Spectacled, Steller's and King eiders decked out in their colorful breeding garb. Striking Red Phalaropes also dot the shallow tundra pools and can even be seen in roadside puddles in town. In the native tongue, Utqiagvik means "the place we hunt snowy owls." Though the population of these beautiful white owls rises and falls based on lemming numbers, there are always a few that nest around Utqiagvik and even in poor lemming years and we will have decent chances to see one during our forays. Utqiagvik's tundras are also the breeding grounds for Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers, with the booming display of the Pectoral being an especially unique experience, somewhat reminiscent of a booming mini sage-grouse. In some years Buff-breasted Sandpipers are also present, though seeing them usually requires hiking well away from the road. Other birds that are regular around Utqiagvik in June include Brant, Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose (abundant), Long-tailed Duck (abundant), Pacific and Red-throated loons, Sabine's Gull, Pomarine Jaeger, Glaucous Gull, American Golden-Plover, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-eared Owl, Snow Bunting and Lapland Longspur. Though they are decidedly uncommon, Yellow-billed Loons are also regularly recorded on June trips. Nights in Utqiagvik.





## Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

### DAILY ITINERARY (cont)

#### *Snowy Owl*



#### **June 15, Day 18, Return to Anchorage**

Depending on the flight schedules, we will probably have a few final hours in Utqiagvik before we have to go to the airport for our return flight to Anchorage. Upon arrival we will collect our stored baggage, plan for a final dinner together at the hotel and tally our final trip checklist. Night in Anchorage.

#### **June 16, Day 19, Flights home**

Participants can schedule their flights out of Anchorage anytime this morning.



#### *Spectacled Eider*





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May 29-June 16, 2022

## Tour information

### Cost

The price for this tour is \$10,400 from Anchorage and includes 18 nights lodging (Day 2 through Day 18, 3 round trip airfares: between Anchorage and St. Paul, Anchorage and Nome and Anchorage and Utqiagvik, all ground transporation during the tour, guide service throughout the tour, all park entrance fees, an all day boat trip through Kenai Fjords NP and all meals beginning with dinner on May 29 and ending with dinner on June 15. The single supplement for the tour will be \$1600. It does not include alcoholic beverages, tips, round trip airfare between your home and Anchorage or any checked baggage fees on the flights to Barrow, St. Paul or Nome.

## Tour Registration

A deposit of \$1800 and a completed registration form will be required to secure a place on this tour. Checks should be made payable to Otus asio Tours and mailed to Jan Hansen at 900 Hillsborough Road in Chapel Hill NC 27516

### Tour Size

The maximum number of participants on this tour will be 8.

### Cancellation Policy

Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule:

90 or more days before the tour departure date (March 1, 2022 or before): 50% of the deposit will be refunded

Less than 90 days before the departure date (March 1, 2019 or later) and after full payment has been received, refunds will be limited to that which can be recouped from vendors, airlines and booking agencies. This may be as little as 25% of the amount paid.

Registrants are strongly encouraged to consider purchasing trip insurance to protect them from financial loss due to their cancellation of the tour less than 90 days prior to departure. An excellent resource for travel insurance is [squaremouth.com](http://squaremouth.com) which is an online clearing house that will help you decide upon and purchase the best travel insurance policy for your trip.

### Travel Delays

Bad weather that causes travel delays is always a possibility in Alaska. In the event that this happens, we will do everything we can to organize and arrange alternative activities. We will also do our best to cancel forward bookings and apply any refunds to the extra costs incurred by additional time spent at the current location. However, any uncovered costs resulting from the delay will be the responsibility of the participants. This is another reason to purchase a trip insurance policy that will cover such contingencies.



# Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

## Tour information (cont)

### Trip Difficulty

This tour is not especially physically demanding, but it will include some walking on uneven terrain. The most difficult physical activity will be the uphill hike through the tundra tussocks to the Bristle-thighed Curlew breeding site. This hike isn't particularly long, but walking across the tussocks is tiring and requires effort and concentration. After reaching the top of the ridge, it can sometimes take several hours to locate Bristle-thighed Curlew, which means that much additional time on your feet on difficult terrain. We may also walk a bit over spongy tundra on the Pribilofs and in Barrow and this also can be strenuous, however anyone in reasonably good physical condition should be able to participate in any of these walks. The remainder of the hikes will be on flat, mostly even trails and roads and should not be challenging for anyone in relatively good physical condition. The long hours of daylight can interfere with people's sleep patterns and are a temptation to stay in the field for ridiculously long hours. I try to minimize this as much as possible and remain on a normal daily schedule without regard to the length of the days. However, in the past some groups have opted for long days and short nights and after dinner outings are sometimes offered. Such things are always optional and there will always be available options for anyone wishing to retire for the day whenever they deem it appropriate to do so.

### Climate and Clothing

The weather in Alaska in early June is highly unpredictable, especially in Nome, St. Paul, Utqiagvik and on the boat in Seward. To best prepare for this trip you will need to be ready for a variety of potential conditions. Dressing in layers is always the best option for such climatic conditions and a good supply of fleece or synthetic wool under and outer garments will be essential. You will also need a warm jacket, hat and gloves, warm socks and waterproof boots that you can walk in comfortably. Rain gear or a poncho will also be necessary. It can be surprisingly warm in Alaska at this season and you will need to be prepared for that as well. In the areas around Anchorage and Seward temperatures could be in the mid-60's to mid-70's, although 50's is probably more likely. Nome will likely have highs in the 40's, although in the past I have experienced much warmer weather there. In 2018 temperatures soared into the mid-60's! Whatever the temperature, it usually feels much colder in Nome because of the constant winds off of the Bering Sea, so hope for warmth but anticipate and be prepared for chilly days and nights. The boat trip is always cool to cold due to the winds off the glaciers and cold surface waters. In Utqiagvik it may never get above freezing and if it's windy and overcast will feel much colder. St. Paul is slightly more moderate, but temperatures there rarely climb above 50 and sunny days are rare.

### Transportation

We will be traveling in either 12 or 15-passenger vans in Nome, Anchorage and Seward. On St. Paul we will have drivers and will use vehicles provided by the native corporation on the island. These are generally older passenger vans, but are large enough to carry our group comfortably. In Utqiagvik we will use an 11-passenger van.



# Alaska: Birding the Northern Frontier

May 29-June 16, 2022

## Tour information (cont)

### Equipment

Pack a pair of binoculars in good condition, along with a belt pack or daypack for your daily accessories. Some essential equipment to carry would include sunglasses, lip balm or chapstick and an alarm clock. It is always a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items and medications in your carry-on bag, so that in the event of lost luggage you will have your essentials.

### Luggage Storage

The hotel in Anchorage will have a storage room that we can use to stow excess baggage when we travel to Nome, Seward, St. Paul and Utqiagvik. This is a difficult trip to pack for and limiting one's luggage given the nature of the tour can be challenging. At the same time, space in the van that we will use in Anchorage and Seward is limited, and there are baggage size limits for the flight to St. Paul, so we must try to minimize what we take with us as much as possible. This is much easier to do with the option of leaving unnecessary items in Anchorage while we are away for several days. The storage room is very secure and luggage retrieval fairly fast and easy, so concerns about theft and accessibility are not an issue.

### Internet Access

Wi-Fi is offered at all hotels on this tour although outside of Anchorage it is sometimes slow and the service can be sporadic. However this has improved dramatically in recent years and in 2019 the speed and reliability was quite good everywhere including on St. Paul.

### Information

For further information contact Jan Hansen at 919-259-9423 or [otusasio-tours@gmail.com](mailto:otusasio-tours@gmail.com).

