

found and photographed at Socorro 30 Jul (JP, ph. JO); there had been about 5 previous undocumented sightings dating back to 1983. Yet another southerner pushing N was a Red-faced Warbler in the Zuni Mts. 11 Jun (JT), a first for that area; also in the Zunis were one-two vocal Painted Redstarts 11 Jun (JT).

Hepatic Tanagers continued their presence in the northeast, including one near Gallinas, *San Miguel*, 6 Jun (CR), four on Rowe Mesa 13 Jun (CR), and one near Sabinoso 19 Jun (CR). Northerly Summer Tanagers included singles on the Canadian R. near Sabinoso 19 Jun (CR) and n. of Tucumcari 12 Jun (CR); unusual were singles in the Pinos Altos Mts. 7 Jun (BZ) and at Deming 25 Jun (LM). With over 2000 reported, Cassin's Sparrow was a close 2nd to N. Mockingbird for the most abundant species detected on New Mexico BBS routes. Cassin's was plentiful in the verdant east, with fewer W to the R.G.V. and in the northwest; it went unreported from the dry southwest until the onset of July rains, when it was found singing commonly near Nutt, Hachita, Antelope Wells, and in the Animas Valley 28–29 Jul (SOW, PM). The 5th year of intensive Botteri's Sparrow surveys found the species well-established in the middle Animas Valley, with 25 occupied territories 28–29 Jul (SOW, PM). One-four Rufous-crowned Sparrows were N to the Rio Grande Gorge and Orilla Verde 7–8 Jul (CR, H.A.). Also N were three Black-chinned Sparrows at Orilla Verde 30 Jun (H.A.). Good grassland conditions in the northeast provided for a good Lark Bunting season, especially in *Colfax*, *Union*, *Harding*, and *San Miguel*; one-four Lark Buntings were S to *Torrance* (SOW), *Lincoln* (J. Kelly), and *Roosevelt* (SS), while far W were two at *De-Na-Zin*, *San Juan*, 9 Jun (H.A.). A Savannah Sparrow was singing from uncut alfalfa at Ramah 12 Jun (JT). Four N. Cardinals were N to Tucumcari 10 Jul (CR), where they are now established; two-three were on Macho Cr., s. *Sierra*, 25 Jun (H.A.) and 24 Jul (JO). North for the season were single male Pyrrhuloxias near White Oaks 4 Jun (SOW) and B.L.N.W.R. 10 Jun (WH). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Zuni 10 Jun (JT). South were one-three Lazuli Buntings singing near Tijeras 5 Jun and later (HS, BV). Although the species summers widely, few Indigo Bunting nests are reported for New Mexico; one with eggs in sweet-clover near Escondida 17 Jun fledged three by 7 Jul (LW). A Painted Bunting was N to Tucumcari 10 Jul (CR). Two Dickcissels were W to Ruby Ranch, *San Miguel*, 4 Jul (WW).

Eastern Meadowlarks continued to be found n. of their expected range, especially in *Union* and *Harding*; three were at Sedan 3 Jun (K. Granillo), 16 at Rosebud 8 Jun (D. Svingen), and one was near Gallegos 5 Jun (SOW). Eleven Easterns at Zuni 11 Jun (JT) and one on Rowe Mesa 13 Jun (CR) were noteworthy. Common Grackles continued to push W, including an adult and fledgling at Bluewater 17 Jul (JO), two at Grants 17 Jul (JO), and one at Lake Valley 24 Jun (CR). Far north was an Orchard Oriole near Cuba 21 Jun (CR); another sang at Socorro 3 Jun (JO). The only Cassin's Finches reported were singles in the Zuni Mts. (where breeding is unconfirmed) 9 & 11 Jun (JT). Moderate numbers of Red Crossbills were widespread in most montane areas, including the Zuni Mts. where "Type-2" birds favored ponderosa and "Type-5s" favored Douglas fir (JT). A pair of Pine Siskins feeding young at 6200 ft at

Zuni 2 Jul (DC) was noteworthy. Lingered Am. Goldfinches included one at Zuni 12 Jun (JT) and two at Orilla Verde 7 Jul (H.A.).

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## alaska region



### THEDE TOBISH

**S**ummer 1999 was characterized by opposite weather extremes. At the beginning of the season, the cold, heavy precipitation of the spring continued well into June throughout the Region. While those conditions debilitated early breeders and protracted the insectivore migration, summer made an abrupt entrance by mid-June and unseasonably dry and warm elements dominated through the period. Except for Alder Flycatchers, most swallows, warblers, flycatchers, and Alaska-bound Palearctic migrants were a few days to two weeks late in arriving. By the end of July most stations registered below-average precipitation, a situation that apparently mitigated the nesting failures anticipated

from the poor spring. Unlike many years, this summer's highlights focused entirely on late arrivals and interesting wanderers rather than significant breeding records. With the continuing trend on funding for passerine research, the previous focus on pelagic and nearshore bird information has unfortunately faded since the late 1980s. Disappointingly, there were few pelagic reports this summer.

**Abbreviations:** ABO (*Alaska Bird Observatory*); North Gulf (*North Gulf of Alaska*); SE (*Southeast Alaska*); SC (*Southcoastal Alaska*); SW (*Southwest Alaska*); UCI (*Upper Cook Inlet*); Y-K Delta (*Yukon-Kuskokwim River Deltas*). Referenced details (†), specimens (\*), photographs (ph.), and videotape (v.t.) are on file at University of Alaska Museum. *Italicized placenames* denote especially unusual locations for the species in question.

### LOOMS THROUGH RAILS

The only Arctic Loon reported was a single over Kotzebue 9 Jul (†DWS). Yellow-billed Loons were widely reported, although a June bird out Chena Hot Springs Rd. n. of *Fairbanks* (*fide* ND) was the only extralimital sighting and one of few Interior reports. Two others in alternate plumage in the Ketchikan area 11 & 20 Jun (TH, PH, SCH)

were local summer firsts—but still within the SE region where scattered summering birds turn up annually. Only two Short-tailed Albatross were described, both immatures around vessels: n.w. of Unimak I 14 Jun (†BMM, GLH, BPG, CLB) and just offshore of St. Paul I. 17–18 Jul (JP, *fide* ST PAUL). Well inshore and unusual for mid-summer were two Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels up Lynn Canal near the Endicott R. mouth 12 Jul (AD). Casual in the Pribilofs and farther north in the Bering Sea, a single Double-crested Cormorant was identified at St Paul 16 Jul (ST PAUL). Another summer **Great Egret** surfaced in Juneau 25–26 Jun (DWS, GVV, PS). Two of the Region's 8 previous sightings have come from the c. Aleutians.

Compared with past summers, waterfowl highlights were fewer and emphasized mostly divers. Blue-winged Teal were on the move, however, with single extralimitals near Anchorage 4–19 Jun (RLS et al.), across Cook Inlet on alpine Turquoise L. 6 Jun (PT, MD, REG), and near Nome 9–12 Jun, for a 2nd local record (RLS, VENT). Redheads also wandered, with a single at Wonder L. in Denali N.P. and Preserve 31 May (NAT AUDUBON) and a pair at Ketchikan's Ward L. 12–15 Jun (SCH, ph. AP) for a first local summer record; a flock of 10+ summered at Anchorage's Westchester Lagoon 17–26+ Jun (NS, RLS, m ob ). A Ring-necked Duck pair near Seward 15 Jun (WINGS) was rare for the Gulf Coast in summer. Two drake Tufted Ducks were out-of-season and rare for SC at Kodiak 19–26 Jun (RAM, SW). The latest and most easterly of the spring season's reports was a female Smew at Tanaga I. in the c Aleutians 8 Jun (ZEGRAHM EXP). A female Hooded Merganser at Gambell Jun 8 (VENT) established the northernmost record for Alaska and a first in the n. Bering Sea Also extralimital—but more in sync with previous Interior reports—were another two 17 Jul in the s. Alaska Range near the Denali Hwy midpoint (WINGS).

Casual in summer at Kodiak was a single Osprey near Karluk L. 4 Jul (PPP). Another Am. Kestrel pair was suspected nesting 17 Jun out Eagle R. Valley n. of Anchorage (NS) in an area at or close to the southernmost edge of the species' breeding range in the Region. Soras were reported only at 25-Mile Marsh, with up to three there 12 Jun–3 Jul (AD); this small wetland complex inland from Haines has been the most consistent habitat in the Region for Sora over the past decade

## PLOVERS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

As usual, summer season shorebird highlights punctuated the end of northbound and the onset of southbound passage. Late spring migrants included an oddly located Black-bellied Plover up the Glenn Hwy near Sheep Mt. 12 Jun (WINGS), where there are no previous reports; single Mongolian Plovers at Nome 12 Jun (VENT), where casual, and at Gambell 13 Jun (NAT AUDUBON); three+ Com. Ringed Plovers still around Gambell to at least 13 Jun (NAT AUDUBON); single and northerly uncommon Wood Sandpiper and Com. Sandpiper, also at Gambell 10 Jun and later (NAT AUDUBON); two Com. Sandpipers on the beach at Kasatochi I., c. Aleutians, 6–10 Jun (LS); and a casual Bering Sea Short-billed Dowitcher at St. Paul I. 15 Jun (VENT).

Another Black Oystercatcher moved well N of known Lower Cook Inlet locales to Anchorage and freshwater habitats 11–12 Jun (FIELD GUIDES, TT, DFD) for a 2nd UCI record. Madly displaying Pectoral Sandpipers were more common in ephemeral habitat around and inland of Nome, where they are rare local breeders, 6–8 Jun (WINGS). A pair of Pectorals at alpine Turquoise L. on the s.w. slope of the Alaska Range 14–23 Jun (PT, MD, REG) probably established the southernmost nest for the Region. At or beyond the northern periphery of the species' range were two Short-billed Dowitchers near Sheep Mt. on the Glenn Hwy 12–14 Jun (WINGS). Short-billeds, likely overshoots or pioneering males, are found sporadically—usually displaying over sedge pools in the Alaska Range/Talkeetna Mt. passes in the first half of June. Initial southbound peeps away from Bering Sea areas, first found mostly after 22 Jun at N. Gulf staging centers, were somewhat late with unremarkable peaks. Notable southbound firsts included a Gray-tailed Tattler at St. Paul 13 Jul (ST PAUL) and early SE area Stilt Sandpipers 24 & 28 Jul at Juneau (PS, GVV).

Away from regular sites, a single Black-headed Gull turned up at Nome 12 Jun (WINGS, VENT) where casual in summer. Noteworthy for summer, Ring-billed Gulls included singles in Ketchikan Harbor 6 & 30 Jun (SCH) and another north at Juneau, 27 Jun (PS); most SE records occur concentrated s. of the Stikine R. after early July. Aside from the regular Bering Sea numbers and locations, an ad. Slaty-backed Gull up Cook Inlet at Anchorage 12 & 20 Jun (FIELD GUIDES, DWS) was the season's significant report Caspian Terns included

another pair on Anchorage mudflats 23 Jun (DFD, BP) for a 6th UCI record; a single at Ketchikan Jun 6 (SCH), where rare; and excellent concentrations from the Juneau area, with a peak 14 on 23–24 Jul (PS, GVV). Typical for the last decade were single *longipennis* Com. Terns from St. Paul I. in the Bering Sea 10 & 26 Jun (WINGS, ST PAUL, BR). A breeding-plumaged Dovekie in the *Aethia* colony at Kasatochi I. 25 Jun (†LS) was the *Aleutians'* 2nd ever; Dovekies are casual s. of St. Lawrence I. at any season. Significant Marbled Murrelet summer concentrations were again tallied in Juneau's Auke Bay, with a high of 2100+ on 28 Jul (GVV). Parakeet Auklet numbers have grown at Woman's Bay, Kodiak I., colonies since the last census from the 1970s; this season 92 individuals were found on 4 small islets (RAM, KT, CA). Rare inshore and at the e. periphery of the species' range, two Crested Auklets were in Aialik Bay 24 Jun (VENT).

Following widespread late spring arrivals to Bering Sea islands, Com. Cuckoos continued to show up through late June. Included in this year's movement was a minimum *seven* around St. Paul I. 3–18 Jun (ST PAUL, WINGS, VENT) and another *four+* at Gambell 6–13 Jun (VENT, NAT AUDUBON). A singing male in Anchorage woods near Westchester Lagoon Jun 17 (tape TGT et al.) was SC's first report, and it extends the species' occurrence in the Region another 900+ km to the east of Shumagin Is., where Gibson had a suspicious pair also in June. DeMartini's Haines-area wanderings produced at least nine Com. Nighthawks 28 Jun–30 Jul at sites where individuals had shown breeding behavior the past few years; the combination of excellent gravel bar habitat and good access have made the Chilkat and Klehini R. watersheds the best site in the Region for this casual summer visitor. Breeding information for Black-backed Woodpecker, one of the Region's least known residents, is always noteworthy: an accessible nest in e. Anchorage woods June–25 Jul and later (RLS, m.ob.) provided only the 2nd confirmed nest record for UCI.

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

Given the extremely late and protracted passerine migration this year, it is not surprising that Alder Flycatchers were reported through June off the SE mainland in what were probably record numbers. Six together near Juneau 20 Jun (PS) and another three offshore around Revillagigedo and W to *Prince of Wales I* 13–24 Jun (SCH, MB)

were notably late and unprecedented for offshore sites. Continuing the trend of the past decade, at least one **Willow Flycatcher** was confirmed in song n. of Juneau 4–5 Jul (tape PS). VanVliet's Juneau-area yard certainly produced on 20 Jul when an **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, Alaska's first, appeared for much of the day (ph. †GVV, RJG, PS, SZ, NM). Although this well-known wanderer is casual in fall to s. British Columbia, I am not aware of any records n. of the Vancouver area. A Say's Phoebe reported from the U.S./Canada border outside of Skagway 15 Jun (AD) was at the w. edge of typical Interior dry-country habitat; there are few SE records.

The Region's first **Cassin's Vireo** away from SE set up a brief territory in Anchorage residential woods 14–18 Jun (AS, NS, ph. RLS, tape TGT et al.), while another (no details) was reported from mid-elevation evergreen woods near Juneau 15 Jul (RJG). Since the late 1980s this form (now a species) has occurred sporadically, at least at Hyder or Juneau. A pair of Black-billed Magpies actively nest-building late May–early June c. 21 km upriver of Haines (in coastal evergreen forest) was 60 km s.w. of known nesting habitats in Chilkat Pass. Essentially all of SE's known magpie nests have been found in the lower sections of watersheds draining interior British Columbia (e.g., Glacier Bay). A single Sky Lark was late and unusually N at Gambell 8 Jun (VENT). Following the decent spring showing in the w. Aleutians, two territorial Sky Larks were still around the Shemya I. runways through July (MS). The usual scattered singles and pairs of N. Rough-winged Swallows were again recorded from the greater Ketchikan area 17 Jun–21 Jul (SCH, AP); a single at Juneau 6–8 Jun (LE) was the northernmost within this scarce visitant's regular SE range. Always unusual in the Bering Sea, where they show up every few years, four Cliff Swallows made it to St. Paul I. 15–24 Jun (ST PAUL). The usual scattering of extralimital Barn Swallows was reported, highlighted by one offshore at St. Paul 25 Jun (ST PAUL, BR) and three around Kodiak 19 Jun (RAM, SW)—which were the first for that island in 11 years.

Both first records for the Pribilofs—and representing the e. extreme of the spring's w. Aleutians passage—were single **Red-breasted Flycatcher** and **Siberian Flycatcher** at St. Paul I. 3–5 & 13 Jun, respectively (ST PAUL, ph. RP). The early June Siberian Rubythroat push also moved at least ten birds, including singing males, to St. Paul I. 5 Jun–1 Jul (ST PAUL); the July

date suggests some of these individuals summered there, a rare event. At least one Eye-browed Thrush skulked around St. Paul 4–10 Jun (ST PAUL), the season's only spring leftover. Anchorage's "resident" **Northern Mockingbird** continued downtown near the cemetery (see the spring report), holding a loose territory 25 Jun through the period (KB, m.ob.). A female White Wagtail first located 10 Jun had a nest and 4 eggs in downtown *Talkeetna* 23 Jun–4 Jul (JP, MN, ph. †RLS, NS); although no mate was found during this period, she actually replaced eggs that were collected from the nest. Summer-season extralimital and fall migrant White Wagtails have appeared away from their narrow Bering Sea coastal breeding areas—casually in the Interior and SC—but until now there were no documented outlier nesting attempts. The season's only Tennessee Warblers were singles 10 Jun at Juneau (LE)—where it is probably an annual migrant—and on the Anchorage Hillside 19 Jul (WINGS), where it accompanied local chickadee family groups (and followed last summer's first UCI report).

Another **Black-headed Grosbeak**, this time a singing male in Juneau 11 Jun (†PS), added to a string of about 5 spring/summer Alaska records, all from the s. half of SE. Likely overshoots from the nearest known breeding areas e. of the Wrangell Mts., a pair of Purple Finches in subalpine thickets near Dixie Pass some 30 km n.e. of *Chitna* Jul 14 (†CE) constituted Central Alaska's 3rd record and the 2nd in summer. Well offshore, but unrelated to any known mainland summer vanguard, a lone Red Crossbill was at St. Paul 18–26 Jul (ST PAUL); there are a surprising number of such Bering Sea records, usually from late-summer/fall. The Gambell Hawfinch, first noted in late May, remained habituated there through at least 12 Jun (NAT AUDUBON).

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