



Abbreviations: North Gulf (North Gulf of Alaska). Referenced documentation specimens (*) are on file at the University of Alaska Museum. Italics indicate especially unusual locations or dates for the noted species.

WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

Casual in spring, single Ross's Geese associating

with Snows were reported from new locations, at Seward 25 Apr–10 May (CG, DWS, RAM) and at Hyder 12 May (LD). The main coastal Brant push seemed a little late, with numbers still being noted to the s. into late May, e.g., hundreds at Gustavus 27–28 May and others off Ketchikan 25 May (SCH, AWP). Normally in mid- to late May, Brant are seen in smaller flocks of presumed non-breeders, which take their time moving northward. Two different Cackling Geese were at Gambell 4 & 8 Jun (Wings). Aleutian Cacklings were the first arrivals at Shemya 23

showing across the Region, highlighted by an Aleutian peak of 33 from Shemya 20 Apr (MTS, LES) and singles in Glenallen 20 May and to the n. at Mentasta the next day (AL, BD, DR, KL). Mallards are surprisingly rare in the Bering Sea, so a pair at Gambell 4–5 Jun (Wings) was casual for spring for St. Lawrence I. Always rare, drake Cinnamon Teal appeared 21 May at Juneau (ph. PS et al.), where regular recently, and at Kodiak 28 May (ph. RAM). More unusual was a handsome male Cinnamon Teal × Blue-winged Teal hybrid at Juneau 18 May (ph. PS). Three Northern Shovelers were rare at Gambell 4–8 Jun (Wings), as were up to 11 in Shemya ponds 20 Apr–15 May (MTS, LES), where singles are occasional. Single Eurasian Teal were described from Juneau 25 Apr and 5 May (PS) and at Hyder 12 May (LD).

Several coastal sites produced the average scattered extralimital *Aythya*, including Ketchikan's first-ever spring Canvasback 7 May (RN, *fide* SCH) and a female-type Tufted Duck at Kodiak 2 Mar (RAM), in addition to that area's wintering drake, which was last recorded 11 Apr (ph. RAM, HG). Juneau's Pt. Bridget vagrant trap produced a female King

Eider on 16–19 May (ph. PS, ND, MS). Most of the stray eiders in the Southeast are detected between late fall and winter. This season's peak scoter aggregation, an annual phenomenon tied to spawning herring, was an estimated 15,000 Surfs near Ketchikan 21 Apr (SCH, AWP). Smews were in above-average numbers in the cen. Aleutians, with up to 6 for the season at Shemya 1–21 May (MTS, LES) and 2 imm. at Adak 10–21 May (H.L.N.T., V.E.N.T.). Two Hooded Mergansers were discovered near Talkeetna 27 Apr–1 May (CM), at the outlet of Fish L., for the 10th year in a row. Another drake Hooded was reported without details from farther e. on the L. Louise Rd. 26 May (RW, BF). There are occasional spring or summer records from the s.

Interior. Gambell observers identified 2 Common Mergansers of the nominate subspecies at Gambell 7 Jun (Wings). Two groups of 3 Ruddy Ducks in the Fairbanks area 7 (A.B.O., JW) & 15–18 May (LD, NH) and a pair on Kenny L. in the s. Interior 21 May (AL, BD, DR, KL) made one of this migrant's best spring showings in the Region.

Arctic Loons were well represented at both ends of the Bering Sea, with up to 3 off Adak 24 May (V.E.N.T.), a season peak of 6 off the Gambell seawatch 6 Jun (Wings), and at least 5 onshore at Shemya 22 Apr–19 May (MTS,

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Coverage-wise, spring 2006 turned out to be one of the best ever for this vast and varied Region. Bird tours blanketed the Bering Sea outposts, including late May at Adak, where at least three tours revealed just how good the central Aleutians can be for Asian birds. The Bering Sea islands, whose spring season excitement seems so tied to the passage of weather systems, were less productive in that regard this spring. Only one sizeable anticyclone appeared responsible for a mid-May fallout, which must have factored in a new record for North America from isolated Buldir Island in the western Aleutians. Elsewhere the season was described as more like springs of the past, or *La Niña*-like, with a few warm spells otherwise overshadowed by a cool, cloudy, and slowly evolving season. Indeed, except for a near-record week of 70-degree temperatures in mid-May, the Region was at or below norms for temperature and precipitation: through much of the north, persistent freezing conditions, a deeper, more southerly sea-ice peak than in the past few years, slowly thawing coastal tundra, a lingering snowpack, and late ice-outs on larger rivers and lakes were the rule. Very few record-early local arrivals were submitted, and most locales noted average to late arrivals. As is always the case, it is difficult to make a logical cut-off between the spring and summer season, so this time I included most of the Gambell highlights, which extended into June. Documentation of rarities continues to be sporadic; I encourage all observers to submit descriptions of all rarities, including those photographed or videotaped.



This Stonechat—of the Siberian *maura* subspecies group, sometimes split as Siberian Stonechat—furnished the seventh or eighth record for Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. This nonadult male was found by Phil Davis on 24 May 2006 (here) in the Gambell boatyard and was last seen 26 May. Photograph by Tom Getz.

Apr, where the spring peak was over 600 on 10 May (MTS, LES). It was only in the early 1980s that *leucopareia* Cacklings were still undetected in the w. Aleutians away from their only stronghold at Buldir I. A flyby Tundra Swan over Shemya 23 Apr (MTS, LES) was rare for the w. Aleutians.

What was likely a restless drake Wood Duck that had wintered somewhere in Southeast was located near Juneau 10 Mar–27 Apr (RM et al.), providing one of very few spring records. Eurasian Wigeon made a strong



This Long-billed Murrelet in transitional plumage, found by West Serafin and Forrest Davis, is the first documented for the Aleutian Islands. Good documentation permits the species to be moved to the regular Aleutian checklist list from the hypothetical list. Found in Sitkin Sound, Adak Island on 17 May 2006 (here), the bird showed a gleaming white throat and long bill, features that distinguish Long-billed from Marbled and Kittlitz's Murrelets, also present at Adak. Photographs of this individual represent the only ones known of a Long-billed in this plumage.

Photographs by Phil Davis.

LES). Two Pied-billed Grebes near Cordova 4-7 May (DJ, *fide* AL) were rare and well n. of most previous spring reports, which are typically from s. Southeast. Another Manx Shearwater was documented in the North Gulf, just w. of Sitka on 25 May (ph. GM). We now have close to a dozen records of mostly singles scattered across the e. North Gulf between Baranof I. n. to the shelf edges between Middleton and Kodiak Is., mostly between the end of May and early Sep. Brandt's Cormorants were late to leave their only regular winter site in the Ketchikan area, where 16 were tallied s. of town 21 Apr (SCH, AWP) and 3 imms. located 20 May (ph. SCH, AWP) were the latest ever. Since this species reaches the edge of its breeding range on larger islets off the Southeast coast, n. of Ketchikan, winter birds there possibly originate from breeding sites on either side of Dixon Entrance. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service crew arrived at Buldir I. 25 May and found 7 heron corpses over the next two weeks: 2 Great Egrets of the subspecies *modesta* (first Alaska specimens), North America's first Intermediate Egret (*), and 4 Black-crowned Night-Herons (*fide* ILJ). Although there had been a large low-pressure system across the w. Aleutians earlier in the month, it is not certain when they arrived. Buldir has been the site of previous spring such finds, the last of which was a Little Egret of the nominate subspecies in 2000. There are now seven taxa of Asian herons documented by specimen from the w. Aleutians (*fide* DDG).

Raptors seemed concentrated and on the

early end of average arrivals. An Osprey hunting around Adak 18-23 May (H.L.N.T., V.E.N.T.) was rare for the Aleutians. Swainson's Hawks followed form as a sporadic and very local spring migrant, with Interior sightings of singles at the Gunsight Mt. hawkwatch 26 Apr (CF, PF) and in Fairbanks 5 May (A.B.O., DDG). Casual for Southeast was a dark morph photographed at Juneau's Pt. Bridget 25 May (ph. PS). Shemya produced yet another Eurasian Kestrel 21 May (ph. MTS, LES); there is a nearly even spring/fall split of the Region's records. A late-season



Well out of range and habitat was this subadult Ivory Gull in Anchorage, Alaska, where it favored a local ribs-and-seafood grill 23-30 (here 23) May 2006. Photograph by R. E. Gill.

cold spell froze a Virginia Rail into ephemeral flowing waters in Juneau 14 Mar, where it succumbed two days later (*; RA); there are only a few previous records, most from late fall/winter, including one to the n. at Gustavus. Other single migrant Virginia Rails were recorded in Juneau 22 May (PS, ND) and in the same sedge marsh as last summer's bird in Gustavus 28 May (BP). In Juneau, a Sora 22 May was followed by 3 on 28 May (DR et al.), the season's only report.

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH ALCIDS

A large mid-May storm that moved across the w.-cen. Aleutians was responsible for most of the rarer Asian shorebirds recorded, and there were several early or extralimital finds along the North Gulf Coast and on the Mainland. Very early Black-bellied Plovers arrived at s sites such as Kenai 1 Apr (one bird; TE); 2 near Sitka 14 Apr (MLW, MET) must have wintered nearby. Pacific Golden-Plovers were also on the early end, with an arrival 16 Apr at Gustavus (ND) and one 28 Apr at Ketchikan (SCH, AWP). At Adak, a Lesser Sand-Plover 16 May (H.L.N.T.), a Common Greenshank 18 May (H.L.N.T., V.E.N.T.), a Gray-tailed Tattler 23 May, and 5 Common Snipe 18-25 May were highlights (H.L.N.T., V.E.N.T.); a Wilson's Snipe was described from the same Adak marsh with Commons 18-25 May (H.L.N.T., V.E.N.T.). At Shemya, a Far Eastern Curlew was photographed 12 May and a Black-tailed Godwit 17 May (ph. MTS, LES). Wood Sandpipers blanketed Shemya 13-17 May (MTS, LES), and up to 200 were on Adak 16 May (a local record; H.L.N.T., V.E.N.T.), while up to 12 were at Gambell 25 May-5

Jun (Wings). Gambell shorebird notables also included 4 Common Ringed Plovers 5-7 Jun (Wings, vt. PEL), a Common Greenshank 31 May-2 Jun (V.E.N.T., vt. PEL), a Black-tailed Godwit 22-28 May (GK, H.L.N.T.), a Little Stint 31 May-1 Jun (W.B.A., vt. PEL), a Long-toed Stint 24 May-3 Jun (DDeS, vt. PEL), a Least Sandpiper 29 May (V.E.N.T., vt. PEL) and 2 Wilson's Snipe 28 May-6 Jun (Wings) Gambell has the most spring Little Stint reports for the Region.



St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, recorded its second Violet-green Swallow at Gambell 31 May 2006. Photograph by D. Porter.

Most amazing was the Ruff fallout at Gambell that began with a female 28 May; by the afternoon of the 31 May, an active, displaying flock of 31 birds had assembled (W.B.A., PEL). Although Gambell has occasionally produced small Ruff flocks, this year's was Alaska's largest. A Killdeer pair in Ketchikan produced two clutches: a nest with eggs or young from the same pair was located 12 Apr and again 30 May (CF). An Upland Sandpiper at Kenny L. 21 May was at the s. extremes of its Interior passage (AL, BD, DP, KL), while a tardy, record-late northbound Marbled Godwit was at Kodiak 26-27 May (RAM). A Red Knot provided a rare Interior record in Fairbanks 20 May (LD, A.B.O.), while a Sanderling at Kenai 1 Apr (TE) was extraordinarily early and must have wintered on the North Gulf Coast. Extralimital North Gulf coast or s. Bering Sea coast Buff-breasted Sandpipers, once unheard of in spring, were found at Cape Romanzoff 26 May (LD) and at Valdez 29 May (BM), both singles, while 10 was peak in Fairbanks 30 May (A.B.O.). Apart from the usual scattering of Aleutian-Bering Sea islands reports, up to 11 Black-headed Gulls between Gambell (6) and nearby Savoonga (5) 17 May (BB) was a record count from St. Lawrence I. Larid highlights otherwise followed suit from previous spring seasons, with significant finds focused in the Ketchikan area and from a scattering of Bering Sea locales. Another Mew Gull nest was discovered at Jordon L. on Revillagigedo I. 24 May (AWP), where there have only been a few located at this end of the Region. California Gulls made their best-ever spring showing in Ketchikan, with an early arrival 30 Mar followed by a peak count of 100 on 30 Apr and again 18 May (SCH, AWP). Rare anytime in the Region, 2 Iceland Gulls were described by the observers and photographed in the Juneau area 12 & 14 May (ph. PS, RJG.). Fairbanks contributed yet another Ring-billed Gull, an ad. 20 May seen along the Tanana R. (LD), where there are about three previous spring reports. Of the widely reported Slaty-

backed Gull, one in Kenai 1 Apr (TE) and 3 around Kodiak 6 Mar-5 May (ph. RAM) were least expected. Rare in the Interior, especially in spring, were single Glaucous-winged Gulls at Fairbanks 20 May (KR, LD) and se. to Delta Junction 28 May (NH). Although this coastal species moves up some the larger North Gulf Coast watersheds (Copper, Gulkana) during peak salmon spawning, it is rare farther inland. A flock of 100+ Sabine's Gulls encountered 10 km off Sitka 23 May (ph. JS) indicated the standard timing and pelagic nature of this North Slope breeder's spring passage route. Similar pelagic finds were noted off Kodiak in the same time frame (JBA, RAM). Totally out of the blue, and actually just plain odd, was the second-year Ivory Gull that frequented a barbeque restaurant up Anchorage's Campbell Cr. 23-30 May (*fide* REG ph., m.ob.). Its favored perch was on top of the adjacent 10-m sign. There are two prior spring records from the n. half of Cook Inlet. Caspian Terns seemed widespread and very early, including one in Ketchikan 20 Apr (SCH), the Region's earliest ever, one 28 Apr at Juneau (GVV, PS), 2 w. to Cape Romanzoff 26 May (LD), and one in Anchorage 29 May (CC, TT). The large gull colony at Gull I. in Icy Bay included five Caspian Tern nests with eggs and at least 7 ads. 26 May (MK, *fide* GVV), at a site where nests had been found previously.

Very unexpected in the cen. Aleutians was a Long-billed Murrelet, mostly in breeding plumage, documented at Adak 17 May



Still not annual in the Aleutians, this Far Eastern Curlew was photographed at Shemya Island, Alaska 12 May 2006. Photograph by Michael T. Schwitters.

(H.L.N.T.). This represents the Aleutians' first record; a recent spring record from St. Paul I. is the only comparable Alaska report. Extremely rare in s. Southeast, especially in spring, a Parakeet Auklet was described from Dixon Entrance 1 May (MS), possibly near where it had wintered. A flock of 1500+

Whiskered Auklets in the tide rips of Little Tanaga Strait 21 May (V.E.N.T.) was an excellent count in the heart of its cen. Aleutian range and probably included the bulk of the local breeding population amassing near the colonies.

CUCKOOS THROUGH PIPITS

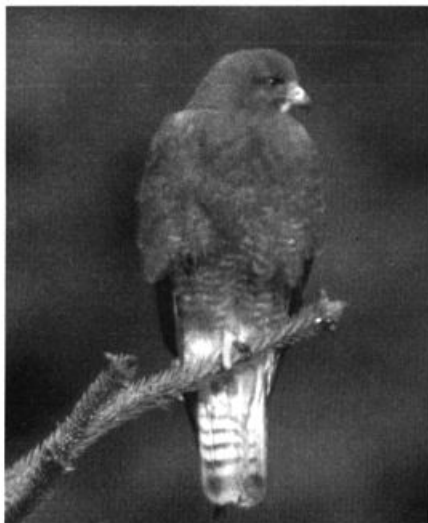
One of the Region's earliest-ever Oriental



One of Alaska's southernmost and earliest Manx Shearwaters was this individual, substantiated off Sitka 25 May 2006. Photograph by G. Meyer.

Cuckoos was found dying on the Shemya runways 20 May (ph. MTS, LES). Western Screech-Owls were reported in normal numbers, with singles calling in Sitka, where regular, 14 Apr and 29 May (MLW, MET), farther n. at Gustavus 25 Apr (ND, PV), and again at last year's site in Seward all Apr (CG et al.). Probably wintering Northern Pygmy-Owls were still at Sitka 16 Mar (MLW, MET) and Gustavus 20 Mar (ND, PV). None were seen in Mar at Ketchikan, where they were abundant earlier in the winter. An adventurous Long-eared Owl managed to find a research vessel about 70 km sw. of St. Lawrence I. 19 May (ph. EL); there are three previous substantiated Alaska records of this species, which is rare n. of se. British Columbia, and there are a few mid-May records from the Yukon Territory. Short-eared Owls, unusual in Mar, were noted at Gustavus 18 Mar and in the alpine meadows above Anchorage in "early Mar" (DW); these birds may well have wintered locally, as spring arrivals are usually not detected until mid-Apr.

Boreal Owls were relatively widespread to the North Gulf coast, with one at Sitka 27-28 May (MLW, MET), one in Gustavus 3 & 15 Mar (ND, PV), and one at Kodiak, where they are known but were more common this Apr (*fide* RAM). Northern Saw-whet Owls seemed in unusually high density at Gustavus 1 Mar-20



Casual in southeastern Alaska, this dark-morph Swainson's Hawk was spotted 25 May 2006 at the Juneau area's Point Bridget vagrant trap. Photograph by P. Suchanek.

May (*vide* ND); one on territory at Kodiak 28 Mar–2 Apr (ph. RAM) provided an overdue first island record.

A feeding “group” of Red-breasted Sapsuckers that was forced into downtown Sitka for several days in mid-Mar (MLW, MET) by exceptional cold and snow was no doubt composed of winter birds and provided a good picture of how regular and common they can be. Kodiak finally got its first Olive-sided Flycatcher 24 May (SS, ph. RAM). Another Skylark surfaced at Gambell 4 Jun (Wings, vt. PEL), where surprisingly regular. Two Horned Larks on the beach near Gustavus 22 Mar (ND) had to be winter birds moving, as spring migrants are not noted until well into Apr. Rare in the w. half of the Aleutians, a Tree Swallow wandered to Adak 22 May (V.E.N.T.), while a Violet-green Swallow moved offshore to Gambell 31 May (PEL, ph. DP), the 2nd for St. Lawrence I. Nearly record early for Ketchikan was a Tree Swallow 9 Apr (SCH, AWP). Possibly record early was a Northern Rough-winged Swallow 12 May at Hyder (LD), where this rare visitor to the Southeast has occasionally nested. The season's only extralimital Barn Swallow was a Nearctic bird w. to Cape Romanzof 30 May (LD).

Another Stonechat, probably a second-year male, surfaced 24–26 May in the beach debris at Gambell (H.L.N.T., ph. TG), where essentially all of the Region's few spring reports have been made. Mountain Bluebirds staged early arrivals across the breadth of the Region's e. front in one of its best showings ever. Earliest arrivals were 15 Apr in Juneau (PR, GVV) and 16 Apr in Fairbanks (AS), with daily maxima of 8 in Hyder 12 May (LD) and 30



This young male Smew was photographed 21 May 2006 at Clam Lagoon, Adak Island, Alaska; it or another had been present 12–14 May near the airport on the island. Photograph by John Puschock.

in Skagway staging and moving northward towards the Interior 16 Apr (CE)—this ties the state's record high count. At the w. edge of what is considered its spring arrival zone, 2 Mountain Bluebirds were noted near Gunsight Mt. in the cen. Talkeetna Mts. 23 Apr (PF, CF). It was a quiet thrush year in the Bering Sea, with just 4 Eyebrowed Thrushes from Shemya for the season 17–21 May (MTS, LES) and one at Gambell 3–6 Jun (H.L.N.T., Wings), where historically casual but more regular recently. Ketchikan's wintering White Wagtail was last noted at its parking lot home 1 Mar (SCH).

WARBLERS THROUGH SISKINS

Warblers made little news across the Region, with Blackpoll Warblers detected in North Gulf coast locations 28 May: at Gustavus (one; ND, PV) and Juneau (4; GVV et al.). Because Blackpolls enter the Region through the Interior, they are rare on the North Gulf in spring and typically detected in early Jun. Ketchikan's winter Western Meadowlark and Common Grackle departed their haunts 23 Mar and 18 May, respectively (JFK). A second-year male Yellow-headed Blackbird dropped into remote Eagle on the upper Yukon R. 25–28 May (SH, *vide* LD); this may constitute the Region's earliest of very few spring records (most are found in summer). Three Brown-headed Cowbirds in Gustavus 29–30 May (JL) were early, while another in Ketchikan 19 May (JFK) was deemed a passage bird at N. Pt. Higin. Bramblings were late and in low numbers in the Aleutians, but 6 at Gambell 28 May–8 Jun (H.L.N.T., Wings) made a good St. Lawrence I. tally, while 2 at Cape Romanzof 25

May (LD) were unusual for the s. Bering Sea coast. A female-plumaged Common Rosefinch was flushed out of the Gambell middens 8–10 Jun (Wings PEL). Given that White-winged Crossbills remained very localized and mostly absent from North Gulf Coast forests, the six nests located in Gustavus Feb–15 Apr (ND) made a remarkable count. Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins, if mentioned, tended to be local and scarce. Fledgling Pine Siskins in Gustavus 6 Apr (ND, PV) seemed very early but indicative of just how early resident finches initiate breeding.

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