

Zuni 16 Aug (DC) and Animas Valley 6 Aug (AC, NMC); late were two at Fruitland 20 Nov (TR), one at Zuni 6 Nov (DC), and 20 near Redrock 27 Nov (CR). Earliest Am. Goldfinches were two at Berrenda Cr. 23 Sep (CR) and five at Conchas L. 25 Sep (JO). The only(!) Evening Grosbeaks reported were 19 at Santa Fe 16 Oct (NP).

Initialed Observers: Pat Basham, David Cleary, Wes Cook, Alan Craig, Narca Moore Craig, Douglas Emkalns, Gordon Ewing, Bernard & Dawn Foy, Lavina Fry, HawkWatch International, William Howe, Larry Malone, Patricia Mehlhop, Bruce Neville, Jerry Oldenettel, John E. Parmeter, James N. Paton, Nick Pulcinella, Tim Reeves, Christopher Rustay,

Lawry Sager, Hart Schwarz, Marcy Scott, Roland Shook, Dale Stahlecker, John Trochet, Nick Vaughn, Hira Walker, Gordon Warrick, Robert Weber, Steve West, William West, S.O. Williams, James Zabriskie.



alaska

THEDE TOBISH

2510 Foraker Drive, Anchorage, AK 99517
(tgt@alaska.net)

Fall 1999 produced yet another in a developing trend of mild autumns, characterized by above average temperatures and dominated by warm, rainy anticyclones. These conditions caused a protracted freeze-up, with minimum mid-season snow accumulations, tardy fresh-water icing, and a slow out-migration for waterbirds. First significant snows were 10 to 20 days late nearly statewide and a systematic low-pressure storm season tracked traditionally across the North Pacific/North Gulf Coast from October onward. Few storms originated north of the central Bering Sea, which directed what to some seemed interminable northerly flows across the north and west half of the Region. Southeast was simply inundated with rain, even more than the norm, which certainly discouraged much field checking. As in several of the past years, early-season mild weather between storms created another window for an early whole-scale passerine exodus. Noteworthy songbird concentrations were totally unreported and again late dates were few.

As in the past few years, the most exciting fall reports came from Bering Sea sites, mainly the Pribilofs and St. Lawrence I.,

where Lehman and Co. set up shop at Gambell from late August into early October. He was nicely rewarded for his efforts and produced plenty of new information on later-season bird movements for that northerly outpost. With the end of Attu trips in sight, fall coverage at places like St. Paul, Gambell, and Nome could take up the void nicely. MacIntosh's 10-day pelagic voyage at the Continental Shelf off Kodiak I. in late August produced a nice seabird summary from the warm-water peak, data we rarely receive in these days of concentrated passerine research.

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*).

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

Three adult Arctic Loons near Nome Aug 18–19 (+WINGS) were unusual onshore, while only one was noted at Gambell 22 Sep (PEL). Two adult Common Loons with a dependent young on Salmon L., Prince of Wales I., 13 Aug confirmed local nesting near the s. end of the species' known Alaska breeding limits. One of the Region's higher single counts was 26 Yellow-billed Loons moving past Gambell's point 28 Sep (PEL). A Pied-billed Grebe showed at Haines 3 Oct (AD), the only report of this rare annual fall visitant. Casual in the n. Bering Sea, two Red-necked Grebes appeared at Gambell, where there are few records, an imm. 22 Sep and an extremely late adult 1–3 Oct (+PEL); with the late freeze-up, above-average numbers lingered well into October in UCI around Anchorage (m.ob.). W. Grebes entered the Region on time in s. SE with a 11 Nov peak of 155 at Ketchikan sites (SCH, AP). Shipboard surveys in August around an active trawler over the Shelf, some 60 nmi se. of Kodiak, produced cautious counts of 30 Laysan, 500 Black-footed, and single imm. Short-tailed Albatross 30 Aug (RAM). Other notable pelagics in the area were four+ Pink-footed Shearwaters 22–26

Aug and at least one Flesh-footed Shearwater 22–23 Aug (RAM)—although probably annual, both species remain unsubstantiated by specimen or photograph for Alaska. This year's significant inshore Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels were reported from the Ketchikan Narrows where they are casual in the fall storm season. Small groups were scattered in the area between 3 Oct–5 Nov, with an amazing peak of 120 present 26 Oct (SCH, AP). Two on Mother Goose L., Alaska Pen., 6 Sep were even more surprising and apparently not storm-related (CA, MM, LM, LS). St. Paul I. observers chased a nervous heron around that island's road system 1–2 Aug that they identified as a **Gray Heron**. They were unable to get decent views of the standing bird and no photographs were obtained. Although this widespread Palearctic species does not breed close to the Region or at northerly latitudes, it is known to wander after breeding season like our Great Blue Heron.

Trumpeter Swan numbers continue to expand in SE, punctuated by higher counts and more juveniles noted on the s. Mainland Naha R. system and an offshore peak of 52 on Prince of Wales I. 25 Nov (AP). Fall season rarely presents many noteworthy waterfowl rarities and this year's mild and tardy season produced essentially none. Prominent finds focused solely on *Aythya* ducks, especially Ring-necks which may be expanding in SE. Near-record local counts were 10+ at Ketchikan's Ward L. 4 Nov (SCH, AP), 20 at Sitka's famous Swan L. through Nov (MLW, MET), and 15 on a Mainland L. near Wrangell 29 Nov (SCH). The Anchorage area's staging peak was latish and totaled only 73 on military base lakes 18 Oct (DFD). Two drake Tufted Ducks wandered e. to Kodiak, where nearly annual, 22 Sep and 26 Oct+ (RAM). Ospreys were near record late in UCI, where an active Anchorage nest had both young and adults present to 23 Sep+ (DFD); two adults on s. SE's Naha R. lingered in an area where they probably bred (AP).

COOTS THROUGH ALCIDS

Rather customary Am. Coot numbers appeared at usual points of fall occurrences, mainly SE, three at Sitka 15 Oct (MLW, MET) being earliest and a group of four in Juneau 20 Oct (RJG) being the peak. Palearctic shorebirds were nicely represented in the Bering Sea, with ten Asian forms highlighting the St. Paul I. and Gambell reports. Significant shorebirds were four Mongolian Plovers at Gambell, getting late 23 Aug–6 Sep (WINGS); juv. Com. Ringed Plovers, casual in fall, at Gambell 20 and 25 Aug (ph. †WINGS); a lingering ad. Com. Greenshank, also casual in fall, at St. Paul I. 6–21 Aug (DWS, ST.PAUL, †WINGS); a fresh juv. Spotted Redshank at St. Paul and somewhat early 23–30 Aug (ST.PAUL, ph. KB); only one Wood Sandpiper to St. Paul 23 Aug (ST.PAUL); two–three Gray-tailed Tattlers 12–14 Aug at St. Paul and four 6–14 Sep n. to Gambell (WINGS); and rare-in-fall Temminck's and Long-toed Stints from Gambell 28 Aug (†PEL) and 21 Aug (†WINGS, ph. TL), respectively. Another Long-toed was photographed at Adak 22 Aug (PB), one of few cen. Aleutian reports. Kodiak's third Ruff was flushed off sedge flats 5 Sep (RAM), the Season's easternmost. Wandering Alaska breeding shorebirds included two extralimital and rare-in-fall Gr. Yellowlegs at the Nome R. mouth 26 Aug (†WINGS), two to three Bering Sea Lesser Yellowlegs at St. Paul I. 15–30 Aug (ST.PAUL), and a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, also rare at St. Paul 28 Aug (ST.PAUL). The season's peak passage Stilt Sandpiper count reached a probably normal seven at Juneau 20–21 Aug (RJG). Most impressive Region-wide and late for the Bering Strait were incredible Red Phalarope concentrations off the point at Gambell throughout Sep, with Lehman's peak estimate an unprecedented 25,000 on 30 Sep. These data provide at least anecdotal evidence that the w. side of St. Lawrence I. provides key staging habitats, at least during harsh weather from the northeast.

This year's obligatory South Polar Skua report came from n. of Adak Strait 29 Aug (KDB+), the only report and an addition to the few Aleutian records—most skua reports come from shelf-edge waters in the North Gulf. Although no Franklin's Gulls appeared, other fall larids made fine showings in SE. At least four **Heermann's Gulls**, all juvs., showed in the Ketchikan area 9–28 Aug (ph. SCH), the site of most Alaska records. Sitka birders reported without details another two juvs. along the coast road 22–31 Aug (MLW, MET), at least a sec-

ond local record. A fresh juv. *brachyrhynchus* Mew Gull was at Gambell 21 Aug (ph. †WINGS); this Nearctic race remains casual on St. Lawrence I. even though small numbers forage along the Bering Sea shoreline s. of Kotzebue. Average Ring-billed Gull counts were submitted from SE, with a peak of 17 from the Ketchikan environs 19 Aug (SCH). An ad. was at Haines 6 Aug (AD), the season's northernmost, while an ad. in Ketchikan lingered very late to 11 Nov (SCH). California Gulls saturated their regular fall habitats in s. SE, again focused in the Ketchikan area, where daily maxima reached a new state record 2,500+ 28 Aug (SCH), with another local high 350 from the mainland's Cleveland Pen. 30 Sep (SCH). Thirty-five were the estimated peak from the Juneau area 3 Aug–29 Sep (RJG). The Haines area attracted the northernmost report, where observers reported at least five from 9 Sep–13 Oct (AD, SCH). Heinl noted that California Gulls lingered later than usual; three were present into December. Gambell observers reported good daily counts of *vegae* Herring Gulls (up to 35/day) 20 Aug–3 Oct, with a remarkable peak of 60 on 3 Sep (TL, PEL). These tallies are likely St. Lawrence I.'s highest ever and hint at the numbers of this Siberian form that probably wander into the Bering Sea each fall. The annual Nome area Slaty-backed Gull inventory totaled only 12 individuals 18–19 Aug (WINGS). Few were mentioned elsewhere. Heinl described a clean Western Gull from the Ketchikan waterfront 24 Oct–11 Nov (†SCH), where pure and hybrid individuals are found annually, mostly in mid-fall.

At least 10 Caspian Terns in Juneau estuaries 3–10 Aug (RJG) represented one of few fall groups away from Prince William Sound colonies. Two Arctic Terns off Gambell 13 Sep (PEL) were well beyond average Bering Sea departures and probably record late for St. Lawrence I. Rare in the n. half of the Bering Sea and for St. Lawrence I. were single Kittlitz's Murrelets at Gambell 3 and 14 Sep (PEL). A Rhinoceros Auklet reached n. into the Bering Sea, described from St. Paul 5 Aug (*fide* SDS), a second local record. Most unusual and extralimital alcid reports focus on fall wanderers into the Bering Sea.

COLUMBIDS THROUGH MUSCICAPIDS

Mourning Doves made a classic autumn showing scattered across SE, with singles from Ketchikan 17 and 24 Sep (SCH), Sitka 5 Oct (MAW, MET), and offshore to Prince

of Wales I. (late) 5 Nov (MAW), and at least two north to the Haines area 15–18 Sep (AD). After extensive review, excellent photos provided confirmation of an ad. **Oriental Cuckoo** at Gambell 23 Aug (†WINGS, ph. TL, ph. PEL). Based on undertail coloration, ventral barring, and underwing pattern, most reviewers agreed this individual was a classic Oriental, the Region's first in fall since the original July St. Lawrence I specimens from earlier in the 20th Century. After years of relative population lows and essentially no irruptions, N. Hawk Owls were on the move to their peripheries. Individuals were reported from several sites outside the breeding range, highlighted by singles at Haines 15 Oct (SCH) and Ketchikan (found dead) 18 Nov (*fide* SCH), a local first; at least four per day were around Mother Goose L. all season (DR, SS, BB, CA). The Ketchikan report represents one of few offshore SE records, where most have been on or adjacent to the Mainland N Pygmy-Owl accounts were slightly short of average, highlighted by three+ around Haines 3 Aug–15 Oct (AD, SCH) and a single offshore on Admiralty I. in cen. SE 1 Sep (SCH). Perhaps encouraged by a protracted freeze-up, late Short-eared Owls included singles at the university ag. fields in Fairbanks 7–10 Nov (*fide* ABO) and another barely ahead of early snows at Gambell 1 Oct (PEL). Following a pattern of recent years, three+ Boreal Owls were noted around Juneau 2–7 Nov (PS, RA, RJG) This interior form has historically been considered casual, mainly in winter in SE. After again being found at recently discovered breeding sites inland from Haines, at least 15 Com. Nighthawks were reported from two sites in the Salmon R. valley 9 Aug–2 Sep (AD). After a long hiatus of fall reports, a **Fork-tailed Swift** was documented from St. Paul I. somewhat early 25–30 Aug (ST.PAUL, v.t. SDS), a third Pribilof record. Completely at odds with the rest of the species' fall phenology, Rufous Hummingbirds again appeared in *October* at Kodiak, where they do not breed, with one documented around Kodiak City 17–29 Oct (ph MR, *fide* RAM). MacIntosh feels that essentially all fall hummers at Kodiak are migrant Rufous that "become trapped" on the island, reluctant to leave the town's flowers and lingering late. There are few other Oct records and most depart *en masse* by early Sep. Rare in SE and a local first was a male Black-backed Woodpecker at Revillagigedo I east of Ketchikan 14 Sep (TG).

Flycatcher reports were light, with a single E. Kingbird described from Haines 24

Sep (AD) the only significant find; after a flurry of near-annual occurrences in the late 1970s–1980s, autumn season reports dropped off significantly since the early 1990s. Local observers nicely described a **Brown Shrike** from Sitka 26–29 Nov (†MLW, MET), the latest of the Region's three fall records and the first in SE. A wandering N. Shrike reached Gambell 27 Sep (†PEL), probably a St. Lawrence I. first. None were otherwise reported peripherally. Casual in fall, especially away from SE Mainland river corridors, was an imm. Red-eyed Vireo near Juneau 29 Aug (RJG). Lehman's description of a male Horned Lark 4–10 Sep at Gambell seemed to represent e. Palearctic *flava*. Subspecies determination of Bering Sea larks is always problematic since both n. Alaska *arctica* and NE Asian *flava* have been collected, especially at St. Lawrence I. This fall produced another round of late departing Violet-green Swallows. A family group of four was tardy at Ketchikan 25 Aug and another two remained nearby to the 28th (SCH), latest for s. SE by a week. Begging young were still

at an Anchorage area nest 18 Aug (TT), UCI's third such August record. Notable offshore in the Bering Sea was a single Bank Swallow at St. Paul I. 15–16 Aug (WINGS). Nearly 30 years to the day after St. Lawrence I.'s first record, another Red-breasted Nuthatch found the Gambell middens 23 Sep (†PEL). Although casual in the Bering Sea, there are growing numbers of fall records for the offshore islands, likely related to successful breeding-cycle dispersals. A bright-plumaged, skittish *Phylloscopus* at the Gambell middens turned out to be North America's first **Yellow-browed Warbler** 23–24 Sep (ph. †PEL). Long considered a strong candidate for the Alaska list, this long-distance migrant breeds in the Siberian taiga as close to the Bering Sea as the lower Kolyma and the Amur R. deltas. Rare in Japan, the NE Asia subspecies migrates mostly inside the Sea of Japan coast and along the mainland shores to SE Asia and e. India. Arctic Warblers cleared out early, with the latest at Gambell 14 Sep (PEL). One was netted and documented in e. Anchorage 23 Aug (ph. BS, *fide* RLS).

Although this Palearctic form nests within 150 km of Anchorage there is only one previous UCI record, a June spring overshoot.

MIMIDS THROUGH FRINGILLIDS

Showing a propensity to wander nw. in fall, another handsome **Gray Catbird** spent 13 Oct in an Anchorage yard, the Region's third and second fall record (DFD, LJO, DWS, †RLS, †TT et al.). Anchorage's apparent resident N. Mockingbird reappeared downtown in Aug and remained in its favored patch of berry bushes through the period (DWS, m.ob.); it has been present since Aug 1998. Fitting nicely in the species' pattern of almost exclusively October records, another **Siberian Accentor** reached Gambell's middens 2 Oct (†PEL). Getting late after a weak passage at St. Lawrence I., a Red-throated Pipit was still at Gambell 27 Sep (PEL). Warbler highlights focused on late migrants and a few Bering Sea waifs, including single Orange-crowned and Yellow Warblers at Gambell 20 Aug (WINGS, ph. TL) and 13 Sep (ph. †PEL), respectively, where both are accidental in fall. Seven Wilson's Warblers flocked to St.



This Orange-crowned Warbler was an accidental stray at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, 20 Aug 1999. Photograph/Tony Leukering

Paul I. 29–31 Aug (ST.PAUL), an exceptional Bering Sea tally. Late warbler highlights included Orange-crowneds at Anchorage 31 Oct (TT) and Juneau 13 Nov (GVV, PS), a Townsend's at Juneau 12 Nov (GVV), and two Wilson's around Anchorage 30 Oct (TT) and another near Juneau 21 Nov (MWS). A recently frozen **Ovenbird** was found in a Fairbanks yard 19 Oct (*fide* ND, *DDG), Alaska's second specimen, second fall record, and third interior report.

Casual for *St. Lawrence I.* were an Am. Tree Sparrow 21–22 Sep and two juv. Chipping Sparrows 19–21 and 29 Sep (†PEL), all at Gambell. Another two Chipping Sparrows were Ketchikan's first ever from a local feeder 24 Oct (JFK)—this SE mainland nester is surprisingly rare offshore. Sitka birders described what appeared to be an imm. **Lark Sparrow** near town 15 Aug (†MLW, MET, JA). Alaska's only other record was an adult along the AK Highway near the Canada border in June. *St. Lawrence I.*'s apparent first *zaboria* Fox Sparrow showed up at Gambell 16 Sep (ph. †PEL)—all previous ones described/collected from *St. Lawrence I.* have been browner coastal forms. Another imm. **Swamp Sparrow**, the eighth local and Region's 11th, appeared at a Ketchikan


feeder 31 Oct (†SCH, PH). Below normal in fall was only one Harris's Sparrow, at Juneau 21–23 Nov+ (MJ, DWS) and single White-throateds from Ketchikan 31 Oct (SCH, PH), Juneau 7 Nov (PS), and w. to Seward the same day (RLS, NS, TT). Lehman's fall Asian component at Gambell included a fresh **Little Bunting** 24 Sep (†PEL), Alaska's fourth and *St. Lawrence Island's* second, all from fall. Aside from a few local small groups, both crossbill species were barely reported. Pine Siskins exploded n. into the interior's Tanana Valley, highlighted by 100s in the Fairbanks area into late Aug. Essentially all departed by early Oct (ABO, ND). As part of this post-season pulse, four each made it to *St. Paul I.* 29 Aug (ST.PAUL), where casual, and Gambell 24 Aug–18 Sep (WINGS, †PEL, ph. TL), where there was one previous record.

Details (†), specimens (*), photographs (ph.) and videotape (v.t.) referenced are on file at UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA MUSEUM. C. Adler, J. Ainsworth, J. B. Allen, C. Anderson, R. Armstrong, P. Bartley, K. D. Bell, B. Blush, M. Brown, K. Burton, D. F. Delap, A. DeMartini, N. DeWitt, L. Edfelt, G. Etherington, B. P. Gibbons, D. D. Gibson, R. E. Gill, R. J. Gordon, T. Goucher, S. C. Heintz, P. Hunt, M. Jefferson, J. F. Koerner, P.

E. Lehman, T. Leukering, R. A. MacIntosh, M. Margulies, B. J. McCaffery, C. McIntyre, L. McKinnon, B. Myers, L. J. Oakley, P. P. Perry, A. Piston, M. Resoff, B. Rowe, D. Russell, L. Sanborn, S. Savage, T. Schantz, L. Scharf, R. L. Scher, M. W. Schwan, M. Schwitters, N. Senner, S. E. Senner, B. Seppi, W. Shuster, D. W. Sonneborn, **ST. PAUL** (St. Paul Tours: K. Burton, M. Greenfelder, L. Ness, S. Toussaint, S. D. Smith), S. Springer, D. Stokes, P. Suchanek, M. E. Tedin, K. Titus, G. Van Vliet, M. Walsh, M. L. Ward, S. Wellborn, J. Williams, **WINGS** (P. E. Lehman, T. Leukering), M. A. Wood, S. Zimmerman.



Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. In most regions, place names given in italic type are counties. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 20.



**St. Paul
ISLAND**
ALASKA'S PRIBILOFS

REMOTE. WILD. UNBELIEVABLE.

Unravel the mysteries of a land where time stands still and nature displays an astonishing array of wonders—St. Paul.

A birder's paradise ♦ 240 species identified ♦ Red-faced Cormorants, Red-legged Kittiwakes, Parakeet, Least and Crested Auklets, murrelets, fulmars, and comical Horned and Tufted Puffins ♦ Annual Asian avian vagrants

Accommodations are cozy, food excellent, and the Aleut people are eager to show you the wonders of St. Paul. Complete package tours available. For reservations and information, see your travel agent, call toll free 1-8-PRIBILOFS (877-424-5637) or visit our web site: www.alaskabirding.com