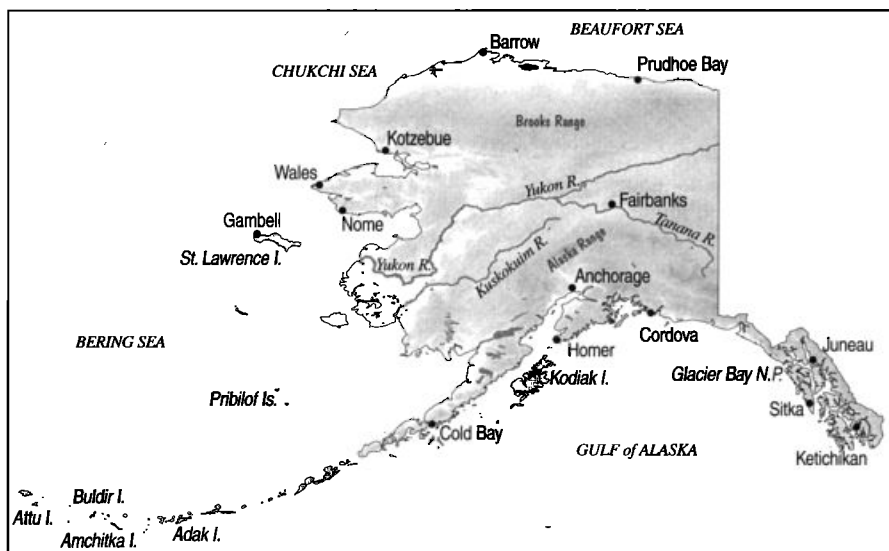


Alaska



Thede Tobish
2510 Foraker Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99517
(tgt@alaska.net)

June 2001 surprised everyone with an abrupt weather turnaround from May, which had been unseasonably cold, held up breeding, and caused local nesting failures across the western half of the Region. Although spring migrants arrived mostly within their average dates of arrival, partial egg-laying and wholesale departures from nesting areas were fairly common occurrences, especially along the west coast and in the alpine zone. Seward Peninsula observers described alpine conditions as two weeks late and the season was felt by many to be one of the latest ever. But literally by 5 June, high pressure engulfed the Region for essentially a month. Coastal and alpine tundra shorebirds attempted to renest or finish earlier egg-laying with marginal success. Elsewhere observers either did not summarize breeding success, or deemed nesting to be about average. July quickly reversed June's warm dry theme and contributed a solid month of cool rainy conditions across the Region. Field surveys in western coastal mountains and in southern Southeast produced numerous interesting and local first nesting finds.

Abbreviations: A.B.O. (Alaska Bird Observatory); N.P.S. (National Park Service); P.W.S. (Prince William Sound); S.E. (Southeast

Alaska); S.C. (South-coastal Alaska); U.C.I. (Upper Cook Inlet). Referenced details (†), specimens (*), photographs (ph.), and videotape (vt.) are on file at the University of Alaska Museum. *Italicized place names* denote especially unusual locations for the noted species.

LOONS THROUGH RAILS

The usual handful of Arctic Loon reports came from the vicinity of Nome in the first half of Jun (m. ob.). Three described from nesting habitat at Alikotngnak L. 1 Jul (RM) along the lower Noatak R. inland and n. of Kotzebue were more unusual and perhaps suspect as nesting pioneers.

Notable shelf-edge Mottled Petrel reports included 3 e. of Kodiak 4 Jul and a single farther w. in Shelikof Strait near the Shumagin Is. 5 Jul (TH, JH). In a repeat of last summer's reports (q.v.), Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels again were drawn away from the open sea to a food source well up S.E.'s Lynn Canal, starting with 2 on 1 Jul and building to an early Aug peak of 330+ (AD). Extending a 1990s trend of apparent expansion into the s. Bering Sea was an ad. Double-crested Cormorant near Nome's Safety Sound 6–7 Jun (VENT), Alaska's northernmost record. Recent finds of nesting pairs on Nunivak I. and n. at Cape Romanzof had earlier extended the species's range considerably into the Bering Sea and n. of traditional Alaska Pen. Sites. At least one Double-crested also loafed in fresh water in Anchorage 18 Jun–12 Jul+ (m. ob.), where casual in summer, while another ventured n. of the Alaska Range to

Northway lakes 1 Jun (KWL), where accidental. Single extralimital Great Blue Herons also crossed into the Interior, along the Chisana R. e. of Tok 5 Jun (KWL), and from the Chatanika R. n. of Fairbanks 11 Jun (*vide* A.B.O.). Great Blues are casual n. of the Alaska Range.

As noted in the past few summers, imm Brant spent portions of the season at scattered coastal sites from Juneau, Cook Inlet, and along the Bering Sea coast. A single along the Alaska Hwy. e. of Tok 11 Jun (KWL) was noted out of range and on an odd date. Four Brant from the Nome area 4–5 Jun (VENT) were described by the observers as being of the subspecies *hrota*. A single *hrota* specimen does exist from Alaska, a Jun bird from Wales, and there are occasional (mostly Jun) reports of pale-bellied individuals from the Bering Sea coast. Of the handful of normal early-season Eurasian Wigeon reports, a drake near Prudhoe Bay 15 Jun (KJB) was of greatest interest, as this species is accidental on Alaska's North Slope. Surprisingly rare in summer off the S.E. mainland, a Mallard brood noted in Ketchikan 28 Jul (AWP) was also a first local breeding confirmation. The handful of other summer waterfowl highlights included a drake Blue-winged Teal at Prudhoe Bay 15 Jun (KJB), where rare and not annual, an unusual single group of 179 presumably loafing nonbreeding Northern Shovelers at the Alaska-Canada Border ponds 29 Jun (AD), 4 Common Mergansers near Prudhoe Bay 26 Jul (KJB), where casual for the North Slope, and only a single Ruddy Duck, a drake n. of Fairbanks in the Yukon Flats N.W.R. 10–19 Jun (DS, AS).

Perhaps indicative of reported poor breeding success across most of w. Alaska, mostly female Common Eiders were concentrating in nearshore waters off the Seward Pen.'s n. side near Cape Douglas by the end of Jun (e.g., 400 on 26 Jun; RM). In more typical breeding seasons, even nonbreeding females remain on the breeding grounds with broods. S.E. scoter concentrations, likely failed breeders and itinerant immes., were drawn this year to food sources on the e. shores of Admiralty I. 10–12 Jul + (AWP), highlighted by peaks of 2700+ Surfs and 1000+ White-wingeds. Each year, Surf and White-winged Scoters regularly leave breeding areas and reconvene at food-rich stage sites where they may remain to molt, or depart later for separate molting areas.

A Bald Eagle wandered onto the North Slope tundra near Prudhoe Bay 3 Jul (KJB) where they are occasional but not annual in mid-summer. Helicopter pilots and then birders refound the "resident" Steller's Sea-

Eagle along its favored stretch of Taku R. near Juneau between mid-June and 31 Jul (*fide* SZ), where it has been seen periodically since the mid-1980s. Another Swainson's Hawk appeared in the Northway area, possibly a local breeder, 27 Jun (†AD). Most summer reports of this very local and scarce breeder originate in the e. and n. Delta Range foothills. Only slightly more regular away from North Slope riparian forest patches was a single American Kestrel also at Prudhoe 12 Jul (KDB). Soras made a good showing within the regular summer range: 2 were present all season at Gustavus near Glacier Bay NM (BP) and up to 3 in the Haines area's 25-mile marsh 17 Jun+ (AD). A single Sora was farther afield, calling from a *Palmer* sedge marsh 26 Jun–13 Jul+ (HG, NS). Soras remain casual basically anywhere away from annual haunts from Mainland S.E. and e. Interior lakes and sloughs

PLOVERS THROUGH DOVES

Always uncommon, irregular and local within its Alaska range, Killdeer made news at several sites, with a first nesting documented in the Ketchikan area, where a half-grown chick carcass turned up 1 Jul (SCH*), and in Anchorage, where an active nest was located 7 Jun (RLS). Singles were reported at several sites between Palmer and Anchorage, with at least 5 seen in Jun. More unlikely was an overshoot Killdeer on the Bering Sea coast, where casual (mostly in Jun), at the Kotzebue airport 7 Jun (RH, ZH).

N.P.S. field survey crews in the Cape Krusenstern-W. Noatak conservation units 1–10 Jun focused in the Delong Mts., turning up interesting territorial shorebirds mostly at the periphery or beyond known nesting areas (REG, LT), highlighted by 10 Upland Sandpipers in the Noatak R. valley within 110 km of the Bering Sea coast 1 Jun, a single displaying Hudsonian Godwit in the lower Noatak in early Jun, 2 Buff-breasted Sandpiper leks, 7 birds total, 3 Jun about 8 mi ne. of Krusenstern Lagoon, and territorial Surf-birds. Although Buff-breasteds are rare spring overshoots to the Bering Sea coast, mostly n. of Nome, this is the first definitive nesting evidence w. of known sites near Barrow. The few other summer shorebird highlights included up to 16 southbound Hudsonian Godwits in Juneau 9–15 Jul (PS, BA), a single Bar-tailed there 4 Jul (PS, GVV), and a handsome Ruff 19 Jun at Prudhoe Bay (BPG, KDB, KJB, RMF), where there are several Jun records. Jul high tides in Anchorage produced unprecedented Semipalmated Plover staging concentrations, with 800+ estimated near Ship Creek 22 Jul

(TT). While doing surveys in the Yukon Flats N.W.R., an A.B.O. biologist discovered Alaska's first **Wilson's Phalarope** nest 22 Jun (LD), while the extreme Jul Anchorage tides produced 2 juv. Wilson's 22 Jul (TT), U.C.I.'s 2nd record of juvs. Wilson's Phalarope may have nested in the nearby Eagle R. estuary in the late 1980s.

As is typical in summer, noteworthy gull reports spanned the Region and included overshoots, late migrants, and early fall arrivals. Larid highlights included a rare North Slope Bonaparte's Gull at Prudhoe Bay 1 Jul (KJB), another photo-documented Gambell **Black-tailed Gull**, a second-summer bird 9 Jun (vt. LS), a convincing ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull in the Prudhoe dump 28 Jun–4 Jul (ph. KJB ph.; awaiting additional review), presumably the same second-summer Slaty-backed Gull in the Kenai R. vicinity 2 Jun–18 Jul (KJB), an inshore Sabine's Gull at Ketchikan 3 Jun (AWP; casual in S.E.), a new U.C.I. high count of 31 Black-legged Kittiwakes in Anchorage 5 Jun (TT, LJO), where casual, and lots of late nw. coast Ross's Gulls, with up to 17 counted near Wales 9 Jun (PJB, JH, JS) and up to 9 in Barrow 16–19 Jun (VENT, MB). Ross's Gulls are casual at best on the Bering Sea shores in spring. Several Mew Gull pairs attempted to nest near Ketchikan on snags in a flooded reservoir, where two certain nests were followed 6 May–10 Jun (SCH, AWP). The closest S.E. confirmed nesting areas are well to the n. near Petersburg. Caspian Terns were quiet away from P.W.S., with up to 4 in Juneau 17 Jun–15 Jul (PS, BA) and another 2 in Homer 11–12 Jul (TH, JH), the only ones reported. Up to 4 Dovekies were spotted offshore at St. Lawrence I.'s East Cape 3–4 Jul (†PB), where they are unknown. Small Dovekie numbers have traditionally been reported around n. Bering Sea auklet colonies but annually only from the w. side of St. Lawrence I.

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A Mourning Dove in Juneau 4 Jul (PS, GVV) was one of few summer reports of this otherwise occasional fall migrant. It was a quiet summer for owls, with the calling Northern Pygmy-Owl from Ketchikan 19 Jul (AWP), a first local summer record, making the only real news. Common Nighthawks were once again on territories in the Chilkat Valley out of Haines, with at least 3 on the Kellsall R. bars 19 Jul (AD), where several have been noted for the past three years. Few observers comment on Black Swifts, which are actually rather rare and local in s. S.E., so a report of 25 noted over the Marten R. in Misty Fiords N.M. 21–23 Jun (AWP) was most interesting and in classic

riparian cliff habitat.

A.B.O. field surveys produced an active (and later successful) **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** nest s. of Fairbanks in the Bonanza Cr. Forests 31 May+ (A.B.O., AMB); this was significantly w. of the Region's two previous nests, located between Tok and the Canadian border. Extralimital Olive-sided Flycatchers roamed out of the taiga to coastal tundra sites, where they are casual, with singles at Prudhoe Bay 12 Jun (DMT) and in the Kotzebue area 14 & 30 Jun (RH, ZH, RM). Casual s. of the Alaska Range, U.C.I.'s 3rd Hammond's Flycatcher was calling from birch woods near Peters Cr. 2 Jun (BM). The season's obligatory Eastern Kingbird ended up at the mouth of the Chilkat Valley near Haines 4–10 Jul (CA, AD). A few Easterns turn up each summer somewhere on S.E.'s Mainland river corridors. Hot on the heels of U.C.I.'s first-ever from two years ago, and the summer's only report, another **Cassin's Vireo** set up territory in the Anchorage area 30 May–23 Jun+ (*fide* RLS et al.). As is often the case in summer, swallows turned up at the Region's coastal periphery, highlighted by a single Bank Swallow 6 Jun (BPG), 2 Cliff Swallows 26 Jun (KDB, RMF), and a Palarctic Barn Swallow 3 Jul (KJB), all at Prudhoe Bay, where all are casual. Another white-bellied Barn Swallow showed up at Gambell 9 Jun (ph. LS), where there are a handful of spring records. Always noteworthy, Rough-winged Swallows nested at Mitkof I 9 Jun+ (AWP) and in Ketchikan 10 Jun–15 Jul (AWP, SCH). Unusual offshore in S.E., where they are local and scarce, were single Red-breasted Nuthatches in Ketchikan 19 & 23 Jul (SCH), local summer firsts.

Especially after a poor spring showing, a male Siberian Rubythroat skulking around shrubs at East Cape on St. Lawrence I. 12 Jul (†PB) was more than a little surprising, and certainly without precedent. There may be only one previous Bering Sea record for Jul Prudhoe Bay was also a source for extraordinary thrush discoveries, including a male Mountain Bluebird 5 Jun (RMF, DMT, RSK, KJB), accidental for the North Slope, and a first Beaufort Sea Townsend's Solitaire on the Endicott causeway rocks 5 Jul (KJB, RMF, BPG, DMT). Casual in s. S.E. and a local first, another tidewater Gray-cheeked Thrush was found singing near Ketchikan's Ward L. 24 Jun (†SCH, JM). Gray-cheekeds are occasionally found along S.E. mainland riparian corridors, mostly in early Jun and n. of the Stikine R. Anchorage's Northern Mockingbird, present since summer 1998, reappeared downtown 17 Jun (m. ob.) after a six-month hiatus. Of the few White Wagtail reports from the Seward

Pen., a male near MP 38 on the Council Rd. 7 Jun (VENT) e. and inland of Nome was most unusual and away from normal coastal sites. Heidl found another singing **House Finch** in Ketchikan 11 Jun (†SCH), a local 2nd and the Region's 3rd ever.

Contributors and observers: A.B.O. (N. DeWitt et al.), B. Agler, C. Allen, J. B. Allen, P. J Baicich, K. J. Bardon, P. Bartley, A. M. Benson,

M. Bowman, K. D. Brady, L. DeCicco, D. F. Delap, A. DeMartini, M. Dementiev, J. & S. Doyle, R. M. Fowler, B. P. Gibbons, D. D. Gibson, R. E. Gill, R. J. Gordon, T. Goutier, H. Griese, T. & J. Heindel, S. C. Heidl, R. & Z. Hogan, J. Huntington, R. S. Kaler, J. F. Koerner, K. W. Larson, R. A. MacIntosh, D. Mako, R. Meyers, B. Micklejohn, L. J. Oakley, B. Paige, A. W. Piston, P. Pourchot, C. L. Ross, D. Rudis, S. Savage, R. L. Scher, M. A. Schultz, W. Schuster,

M. Schwan, L. Semo, N. Senner, S. Senner, D. Shaw, S. D. Smith, D. W. Sonneborn, J. & M. Stab, P. Suchanek, J. Swertinski, A. Swingley, M. E. Tedin, L. Tibbitts, T. Tobish, P. Tomkovitch, D. M. Troy, R. Uhl, VENT tour (B. Zimmer, K. J. Zimmer, D. E. Wolf, M. J. Iliff, et al.), G. Van Vliet, V. Wallace, M. L. Ward, WINGS tour (G. H. Rosenberg et al.), M. A. Wood, M. York, T. P. Zadina, S. Zimmerman.



British Columbia–Yukon



Donald G. Cecile

7995 Wilson-Jackson Road
Vernon, British Columbia V1B 3N5
(dcecile@sd22.bc.ca)

The summer season saw many species exhibiting range expansions, particularly northward and westward, among them Great Egret, Canyon Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Tennessee Warbler, Lazuli Bunting, and Blue Jay. Some species seemed to be displaced due to prairie drought conditions, e. g., Franklin's Gull and Swainson's Hawk. Other conditions may have prohibited breeding, thus accounting for the large concentration of Long-billed Curlews in the central interior. A healthy number of outstanding rarities included

Magnificent Frigatebird, British Columbia's first Whiskered Auklet, Sprague's Pipit, Dickcissel, and Great-tailed Grackle.

Abbreviations: B.C.F.O. (British Columbia Field Ornithologists), Chichester (Chichester Bird Sanctuary, Kelowna), C.I.P. (Cottonwood Island Park, P.G.), F.F.T.W. (Forests for the World, P.G.), F.S.J. (Fort St. James), P.G. (Prince George), Q.C.I. (Queen Charlotte Is.), R.P.B.O (Rocky Point Bird Observatory s. Vancouver I.), U.N.B.C. (University of Northern British Columbia), Whse. (Whitehorse, Yukon).

LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

The only interior report of Yellow-billed Loon

was an ad. 7 Jun (RS) on Ross L. near New Hazelton. Clark's Grebes returned to Salmon Arm, where one of 2 birds was paired with a Western Grebe 2 Jun (RyT) and remained through the period. A female **Magnificent Frigatebird** was sighted from a whale-watching boat out of Tofino 18 Jun (MW). A recently-fledged juv. American Bittern was brought in to P.G.'s Northern Raptor Preservation Society's bird hospital 18 Jul (ph. CM, RM) but unfortunately died a few days later. Great Egrets continue to occur with greater regularity in the s. third of the province, where they are seen annually. Sightings are most numerous for late Apr to mid-May, suggestive of spring overshoots, whereas post-breeding dispersal produces a scattering of sightings mainly from Aug–Dec. This summer, however, produced an unusual number of egrets and from a variety of locations. It should be interesting to see if this is indicative of a larger post-breeding dispersal for the coming fall season. Single birds were reported from Scout I., Williams L. 24 Jun+ (PR, m. ob.); Mt. Lehman, Abbotsford 30 Jun (LM); and Tsawwassen 2-8 Jul (CWr, PL et al.). Well n. of its usual range, a Black-crowned Night-Heron was seen in a field near Dunster 29 Jul (DA, MA) and furnished the most northerly record for the Region. A pair of Gadwall at Stokes Pt. 19 Jun on the Yukon's N. Coast (Arctic Ocean) was at the limit of the species's range (PJ). A raft of 6 ad. Black Scoters was on Eaglet L. 50 km ene. of P.G. 29 Jul (MA, DD, HD)—both an early date and a surprisingly large number.

Broad-winged Hawks are known to nest in the Peace R. area; however, summer sightings in the n.-cen. interior seem to suggest that they are more widespread. A pair at U.N.B.C. was seen sporadically through the period, but they managed to elude nest-seekers, so incontrovertible evidence of breeding in the area still