

Photo Salon: Autumn Alaska

THE BERING SEA AND ALEUTIAN ISLANDS



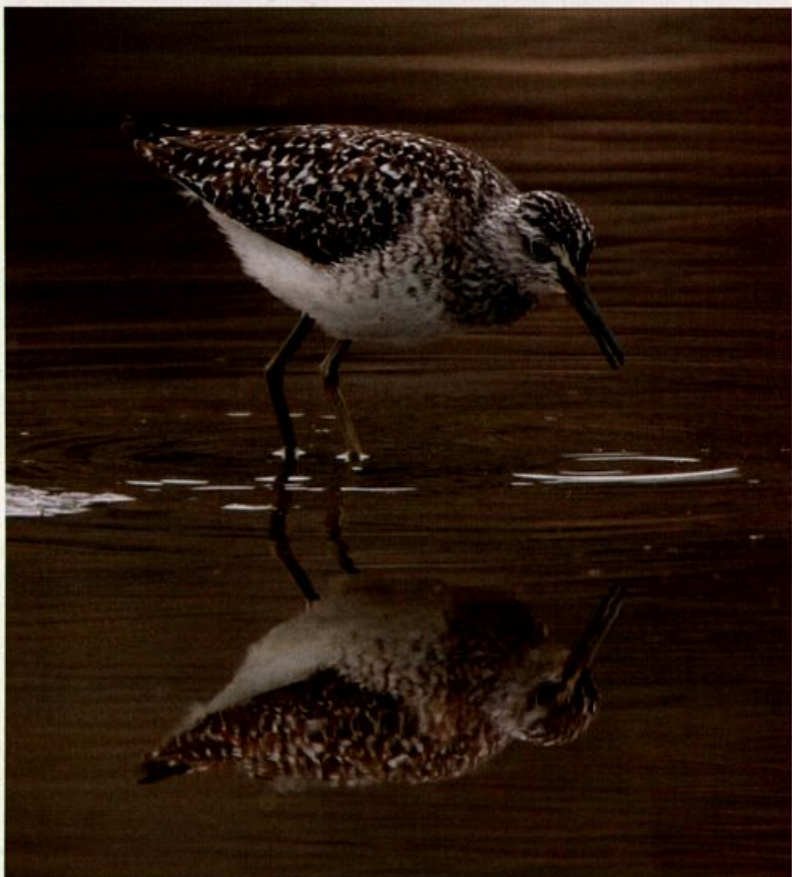
Several species of Asian-nesting shorebirds occur in small numbers during the autumn in western Alaska—between St. Lawrence Island (Gambell) in the north, the Pribilof Islands in the middle, and the western/central Aleutians to the south. Lesser Sand-Plover (left) is found annually in small numbers, this bird being present at Clam Lagoon, Adak Island 16 (here) through 23 September 2004. Photograph by Devich Farbotnik.



The prize shorebird of the season in Alaska in fall 2004 was this juvenile Marsh Sandpiper at Adak 13–16 (here 16) September, only the third record for Alaska and North America. The previous two records are also from early autumn: one on Buldir 2 September 1974 and one on Adak 29 August 1998. Photograph by Devich Farbotnik.



A small flight of Buff-breasted Sandpipers was detected on the Aleutian and Bering Sea islands in autumn 2004, where the species is a very rare though perhaps annual fall vagrant. This season, one was at Gambell and an unprecedented six reached St. Paul—including this bird—between 21 August and (here) 9 September. Photograph by Gavin Bieber.



Wood Sandpipers occur annually in small numbers in the Pribilofs and Aleutians. As with other species in the genus *Tringa*, adults begin the migration southward in July. This adult was present on St. Paul 3 and (here) 4 July 2004. Photograph by Gavin Bieber.

Temminck's Stint is not quite of annual occurrence in autumn in Alaska. This individual was another highlight of this year's September exploration of Adak; it was present at Clam Lagoon 13 (here) through 16 September 2004. Photograph by John Puschock.





Three Pechora Pipits at Gambell during the fall of 2003 were the first ever in autumn in Alaska and were followed by four more in 2004. This bird, present 24 (here 26) August–1 September, is told from Red-throated Pipit by the bolder nape streaking, wingbars, and crown pattern; warmer tones of the head and nape; slightly larger, fleshy-based bill; dark loral line; and by several visible primary tips extending past the longest tertial (no primaries are visible beyond the tertials at rest in Red-throated). *Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.*

In addition to differences in plumage, Pechora Pipit (here at Gambell 26 August 2004) shows differences in behavior and vocalizations from Red-throated Pipit. Pechora usually remains silent when flushed; if it calls, it gives a one- or two-syllabled, rather hard note, very unlike the oft-given, high, thin "spee" of Red-throated. *Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.*



This Gray Wagtail was found 22 September 2004 at Adak, providing just the second autumn record of the species in Alaska. *Photograph by Devich Farbotnik.*

This apparent Oriental Cuckoo spent 16–21 September 2004 on Adak (here on the last date); a different bird, also identified as an Oriental, had been seen 13 September. (Conclusive images confirming identification of these birds was elusive; the distinctive underwing pattern is difficult to photograph but was seen on both birds.) Interestingly, whereas most late-spring records of *Cuculus* cuckoos in Alaska are of Commons, all late-summer and fall records to date are of Orientals or unidentified *Cuculus*. *Photograph by John Puschock.*



Three Oriental Cuckoos were found in autumn 2004 in Alaska. This juvenile lingered at St. Paul from 21 (here 24) September to 1 October and was identified by its well-marked, contrasty underwing pattern—largely unmarked whitish wing-linings contrasting with a distinct, solid slate-gray patch. The bill averages slightly smaller in Oriental than in the very similar Common Cuckoo. *Photograph by Gavin Bieber.*



The premier Asian rarity of 2004 in Alaska was this Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) that appeared at St. Paul on 7 October 2004, establishing the second record for North America of a species that breeds primarily in Europe and winters in Africa. The only previous record was from Shemya Island 9 October 1978. There are a few fall records of the species from Japan. Photographs by Gavin Bieber.



Another Old World warbler—Dusky Warbler—now has seven autumn records at Gambell since 1997; this individual performed there 3 and 4 (here) September 2004. Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.



Recent autumn fieldwork on the Bering Sea islands has shown that a large number of Nearctic landbirds wander offshore at that season, many more than in spring. In addition to adjacent Alaska mainland breeders that occur, a number of species have been found that clearly traveled much greater distances, probably arriving in the region as reversed-migrants or as mirror-image migrants. In fall 2004, the first documented Nashville Warbler (lower) for Alaska turned up at Gambell 5–7 (here 6) September, and the Bering Sea's first American Redstart was there from 18 (here) and 19 September (upper). Photographs by Brian L. Sullivan (lower) and Paul E. Lehman (upper).



Middendorff's Grasshopper-Warbler appeared at Gambell again this fall, the third such record there since 1996, with this bird delighting many birders on 7 September 2004. Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.



Among many American vagrants, Swainson's Thrush staged a mini-invasion out into the Bering Sea, where there were only two previous records, both in spring at Gambell. In autumn 2004, one was at St. Paul—the Pribilof's first ever—on 10–11 September, and a total of 7 birds reached Gambell between 7 (here) through 18 September. *Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.*



Red-breasted Nuthatches—casual offshore in Alaska—staged an invasion into the Bering Sea islands in autumn 2004, with a total of 6 birds at St. Paul 3 (here) through 30 September and a total of 10 at Gambell 6–15 September. *Photograph by Gavin Bieber.*



Purple Finch is strictly casual anywhere in Alaska, with only one previous Bering Sea record (a specimen from Savoonga, St. Lawrence Island, on 5 June 1984). But the autumn of 2004 saw this juvenile arrive at Gambell 7 (here) through 9 September. *Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.*



The only previous Brown-headed Cowbird to be found in the offshore Bering Sea region was a juvenile at Gambell on 6–7 September 1998; three juveniles were found there in 2004, including this bird on 30 (here) and 31 August. *Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.*



Fox Sparrows of several races are rare visitors to Bering Sea islands in autumn. This Red Fox Sparrow at Gambell 6 September 2004 was one of five found there between 5 September and 3 October; St. Paul Island recorded two of this race 25 September–1 October. *Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.*