



Thede Tobish

It was an average spring season that otherwise included a mix of prolonged dry periods, below-average temperatures, and fewer low-pressure systems moving eastward into the northern Gulf of Alaska. Arrival dates for most areas and most groups were close to long-term averages, with perhaps fewer new record-early arrival dates than in most recent years. Coverage at the Region's periphery was again excellent and began early, which is becoming standard now for spring migration and which is contributing nicely to the arrival data at these sites. Weather patterns did little to generate any notable surges of Palearctic taxa in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, although easterly winds probably contributed to a decent push of Alaska's mainland birds into the Bering Sea. Early June conditions did produce a brief early June passerine wave into the western Aleutians.

WATERFOWL THROUGH PETRELS

Two Bean Geese at St. Paul I. 15-17 May and 30 May-1 Jun (St. Paul Tour) and a single at Shemya I. 23 May (MS) were the season's only reports. Wood Ducks, not long ago considered accidental in Alaska, continue to show up in Southeast, showing this spring at Ketchikan, with a drake in salt water 16 Apr (SCH, ph. AWP) and a pair inland on the Unuk R. 20 Apr (AWP). As is typical of early spring, Eurasian Wigeon reports surfaced across the Region, most notable of which was a total of 6 at Gustavus 6 Apr (ND). A 3rd Aleutian record of Spot-billed Duck turned up 28 May+ at Adak (ph. JP), where Region's first ever was documented in the 1970s. Now annual in the Southeast in early spring, Cinnamon Teal showed up at two new sites, with a drake at Ketchikan 15 May (ph. SCH), a local first record, plus another single n. at Gustavus 26 Apr (ND) that was followed by 3 there 1 May and then one on 6 & 23 May (BP, ND).

Three Smews in the Bering Sea at St. Paul I. 12-21 May and then one 21-23 May (St. Paul Tour) were unusually late and e. of typical areas of occurrence, while up to 6 around Shemya 24 Apr-21 May (MTS, ph. RT) were more standard.

Arctic Loons were reasonably represented, with a single at Attu 22 May (DWS), at least 3 around Shemya 15 Apr+ (MTS), and a season peak of 12 from Gambell 5 Jun (Wings, Inc.). Most interesting was an estimate of 700+ Pacific Loons staging in Yakutat Bay 17 May (BC). With recent sightings of large numbers staging inshore in the e. and ne. quadrants of the n. Gulf of Alaska (from Yakutat Bay, upper Lynn Canal, and Portland Canal), it appears that Pacific Loons stage and then disperse from here to points n. and e., along the coast and into the Interior. More unusual in spring than in fall was a single Pied-billed Grebe at Alaganik Slough, e. of Cordova 21 Apr (AL), where there are few reports. Two Horned Grebes ventured northward and offshore to Gambell 1 Jun (DF et al.), where they are casual. An early-season cruise across the Aleutians from Russia produced a fine cross-section of spring Mottled Petrel movements into the Region. Three hundred and then 125 birds were counted on 11 May at points on both sides of the International Dateline (BC).

HAWKS THROUGH ALCIDIS

A White-tailed Eagle was nicely documented from Gambell 2 Jun (ph. DP, Wilderness Bird Tours; Wings, Inc.). There have been a few brief sightings of eagles over Gambell, including reports of White-tailed Eagle, Steller's Sea-Eagle, and Bald Eagle. This year's Gunsight Mt. hawkwatch produced exceptional totals of 584 dark-morph and 63 light-morph Harlan's Hawks (CF, PF et al.). The spring total of only 14 Red-tailed Hawks there represented what must be a representative indicator of the e. Interior's ratio of these two taxa. Two Sandhill Cranes on Prince of Wales I. 1 Apr (JL) were very early in the only offshore area of Southeast where they are probably breeding.

Given the spotty nature of Black-bellied Plover landfall patterns during spring passage, some 400+ near Gustavus 2 May (BP) was an exceptional concentration, especially for Southeast. A single Pacific Golden-Plover at Kodiak 11 Apr (JV) was the season's first landfall within the species' south-to-north oceanic migration corridor. Shorebird high-

lights were otherwise spotty and focused at Gambell, Shemya, or in the Interior, including: a peak of 5 Common Ringed Plovers at Gambell 23 May (PEL); a nice group of 5 Terek Sandpipers at Shemya 30 May (MTS) and a single e. at Adak 30-31 May (ph. JP); a rare Bering Sea Lesser Yellowlegs also at Gambell 23 May (PEL); up to 3 hudsonicus Whimbrels at Gambell 27-30 May (Wings, Inc.); single Great Knots, still not annual in the Region, on St. Paul I. 23-26 May (St. Paul Tour) and at Gambell 1-3 Jun (DF, Wings, Inc.); 4 Sanderlings at Fairbanks 29 May (ABO); and up to 4 Short-billed Dowitchers, casual in the Interior, at Fairbanks 22-26 May (PM). An at-sea Temminck's Stint was described from shipboard observers n. of Attu 12 May (BC), while another was casual and late at Gambell 7 Jun (DF Wings, Inc.). Another female Wilson's Phalarope was documented in Juneau 16 May (PS), where this probably annual migrant is most often located in spring.

As is typical for the spring season, gull reports were an interesting mix of late winter finds and regular migrants from standard areas of concentration. Kodiak observers located 3 alternate-plumaged Franklin's Gulls around the e. side of the island, from 23 Apr-4 May, 10 May, and 27-31 May (ph. RAM, JBA); fall records are considerably more regular. A Black-headed Gull was described from Gambell 31 May (Victor Emanuel Nature Tours), where the species is not regular, as was the season's only Kamchatka Mew Gull 2-5 Jun (Wings, Inc.). The Aleutians' earliest Black-tailed Gull was an ad. on the Shemya beaches 22 Apr (MTS, ph. RT), and another ad. was documented to the w. at Attu 18 May (ph. DWS). These represent about the 7th and 8th records from the Aleutians. The northward spring push of California Gulls commenced on time in Ketchikan, 24 Mar, with a season high of 25 on 11 May (AWP, SCH). The remaining Ketchikan area's Kumlien's Iceland Gull was last seen 20 Mar (AWP, SCH); another was documented from Kodiak 11 May (ph. RAM), the 2nd such documented record there. As is typical, Slaty-backed Gull reports were concentrated from St. Paul I., the greater Nome area, and at Gambell, with unremarkable numbers. Two Slaty-backed were more noteworthy with the late winter gull hordes around Kenai 1 Apr (TB, *vide* TE), which also included a nice spring tally of 5 Glaucous Gulls the same day. A Marbled Murrelet on Tern L. 28 May (AL) in the Kenai Mts. some 52 km from the nearest saltwater habitat was unusual but within the species' known coastal rainforest nesting habitat.



Found and photographed on 28 May 2007 (here) at Clam Lagoon, Adak Island, Alaska, this Spot-billed Duck remained through 31 May. At least two other Spot-billed Ducks in Alaska stayed for at least a year. Photograph by Frank Haas.

OWLS THROUGH PIPITS

Spring Western Screech-Owls are always notable away from the few standard presumed breeding sites (Sitka, Ketchikan, Juneau), so a single near the periphery at Gustavus 18-26 Apr (ND) was a great find. A Northern Pygmy-Owl from the greater Ketchikan area's White R. 31 May (AWP) and about 6 around Gustavus 4 Mar–25 May (ND) were the season's most significant reports. A Boreal Owl corpse located on the Southeast Mainland at the Unuk R. mouth 26 Mar (GW, ph. AWP) is considered extralimital, as we have few documented Southeast records. Following last year's first-ever Kodiak area record, 3 Northern Saw-whet Owls were found there 24-25 Mar (RAM). An Eastern Phoebe, reasonably well described from tidal flats at Haines 11 May (†AD), becomes the earliest of Alaska's now five records, which come mostly from Jun. This species gets close to the Region at similar latitudes on the Alberta-British Columbia border. A handsome ad. **Brown Shrike** photographed at Shemya 6 Jun (ph. MTS, RT) becomes only the 2nd from spring and 3rd overall in the Aleutians.

Mild conditions seemingly drew Tree Swallows into the Region on the early side, highlighted by 14 in Ketchikan 9 Apr (AWP, SCH), close to that locale's earliest ever. A single Tree Swallow was off course at sea at Shemya 3 Jun (MTS, RT). Although Tree Swallows are intermittent breeders at Unimak I. and occasional elsewhere in the e. Aleutians, there are only nine previous spring reports from the cen. and w. islands. A single Violet-green Swallow in Ketchikan 9 Apr (AWP, SCH) likely set a new record early arrival date for Alaska. Ex-

tralimital Barn Swallows made news early, including singles at Kodiak 27 May (ph. RAM), Fairbanks 13 May (LD, NH), where casual, and a pale-bellied bird offshore at Gambell 7 Jun (Wilderness Bird Tours). The season's only Taiga Flycatchers were 2 at Shemya 4-7 Jun (MTS, ph. RT) near the late end of known arrival dates.

Bluethroats crossing the Bering Strait seemed early at Gambell, with a single there 22 May followed by 5 the following day (Wings, Inc.); their breeding habitats inland on the Seward Pen. were likely still under snow. Of the usual handful of Mountain Bluebird reports, a single male near Fairbanks at Murphy Dome 29 Apr (A.B.O.) was most interesting at the nw. edge of the species' Interior range. Extremely rare offshore in the Bering Sea was a Swainson's Thrush at Gambell 31 May (DF, Wings, Inc.), where there were two prior spring observations. Only one Eyebrowed Thrush was located this season, at Shemya a little early on 10 May (MTS, RT ph.). The Mainland's first and the spring's only **Dusky Thrush** was described in the Askinuk Mts. in sw. Alaska 30 May (†LD).

WAXWINGS THROUGH FINCHES

A lone Bohemian Waxwing that had wintered somewhere in the s. end of the Region became the latest ever for Ketchikan 1 May (AWP, SCH). Most Bohemians depart winter haunts in Southeast by late Mar. The Anchorage area's band of Cedar Waxwings, variously present and dispersed around the lowlands since the previous Aug, peaked in late winter at approximately 21 birds through late Mar

(TT). Audubon's Warblers were early, and n. of the norm, at Gustavus, including singles 20 & 26 Apr and 6 May (ND, BP, PV); this subspecies is typically reported with regularity from s. Southeast mainland sites (Hyder) or from the Ketchikan area. A male Western Tanager at Gustavus 27 May should be considered extralimital and was w. of the closest known breeding areas in Skagway and Haines. An overshoot Sooty Fox Sparrow at Gambell 27 May (Wilderness Bird Tours) was casual on St. Lawrence I., where most spring birds are Interior *zaboria* forms. Golden-crowned Sparrows showed offshore at quite a few sites, highlighted by 3 on a ship some 48 km s. of the Alaska Pen. 14 May (BC), one on St. Paul I. 30 May (St. Paul Tour), and singles from Gambell 28 May and 1-2 Jun (Wings, Inc.). A casual visitor from Southeast, a male **Brewer's Blackbird** was photographed n. of the regular sites at Gustavus 18 Apr (ph. ND), where a female was first noted last year. Included with the early Jun push of Palearctic passerines in the w. Aleutians was a female-plumaged Common Rosefinch at Shemya 8 Jun (MTS, RT). It was unusual that the season's only Hawfinch report came from well to the n. at Gambell, where one hung around 26 May–1 Jun (DF et al.). There are few St. Lawrence I. records.

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