

RBA

* Alaska

* St. Paul Island, Pribilofs

* May 30, 2006

* AKSPI 3005.06

Hello Birders, this is the St. Paul Island rare bird alert for the week of May 24-30, 2006 sponsored by St. Paul Island Tour. The following sequence of sightings is in taxonomic order; an asterisk denotes a species of less than annual occurrence or one of particular note.

Birds Mentioned:

*BEAN GOOSE (ssp. middendorffii)

Greater White-fronted Goose (ssp. frontalis)

*EMPEROR GOOSE

Cackling Goose (ssp. leucopareia)

Cackling Goose (ssp. taverneri ??)

*Tundra Swan

Eurasian Wigeon

American Wigeon

Mallard

Northern Shoveler

*TUFTED DUCK

Steller's Eider

White-winged Scoter

Black Scoter

Bufflehead

Common Goldeneye

Red-breasted Merganser

Pacific Loon

Common Loon

Horned Grebe

Short-tailed Shearwater

Sandhill Crane

*Black-bellied Plover

Pacific Golden-Plover

*COMMON GREENSHANK

Greater Yellowlegs

Lesser Yellowlegs

*WOOD SANDPIPER

*COMMON SANDPIPER

Whimbrel (ssp. variegatus)

Bar-tailed Godwit

Semipalmated Sandpiper

Western Sandpiper

Dunlin

Wilson's Snipe

*COMMON SNIPE

Red Phalarope

Parasitic Jaeger

Long-tailed Jaeger

*BLACK-HEADED GULL

*MEW GULL (ssp. kamtschatschensis)

*MEW GULL (ssp. brachyrhynchus)

Herring Gull (ssp. vegae)

Herring Gull (ssp. smithsonianus)

Glaucous Gull

Sabine's Gull

*ROSS'S GULL
 *BLACK GUILLEMOT
 Snowy Owl
 Short-eared Owl
 ***WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE
 Common Raven
 Tree Swallow
 Bank Swallow
 Hermit Thrush
 *EYEBROWED THRUSH
 *RED-THROATED PIPIT
 American Pipit (ssp. pacificus)
 *Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Wilson's Warbler
 *AMERICAN TREE SPARROW
 Savannah Sparrow
 Golden-crowned Sparrow
 *DARK-EYED JUNCO (ssp. hyemalis)
 *BRAMBLING
 Common Redpoll
 Hoary Redpoll

A strong ridge of high pressure dominated the central Bering Sea this week. Winds were either light, or from the North or Northeast. The days were generally sunny and cloud free, although on the morning of the 28th and 29th we experienced some heavy fog. A remarkable number of bird species were tallied this week, with a notable influx of North American passerines augmenting some lingering Siberian birds and a nice assortment of migrant shorebirds and seabirds. This light but sustained weather pattern produced a remarkable species diversity for the week, setting an all-time high species count of 99 species!

The following is a brief summary, with attendant dates for the more noteworthy sightings of the week.

WATERFOWL

Goose diversity was very high this week, with four species sighted. Undoubtedly the most sought after of the four was a large, long-billed BEAN GOOSE, of the subspecies middendorffii that provided extended views on the evening of the 29th in Fantasy Wetlands. Most recent Bean Geese records from the Pribilofs pertain to this subspecies. In addition to our bird Barbara and Kim Turley, currently on Saint George found three Bean Geese on Govorushka Lake on the 27th. Three Emperor Geese loafed on the seaweed covered rocks at Polovina Point (28th) with one remaining through the 30th. An adult Greater White-fronted Goose was found in the grass mats in Webster Lake on the 28th. Presumably the same bird was joined by an immature bird in Polovina Wetlands on the 30th. A few sightings of single Aleutian Cackling Geese occurred around the island this week. In addition, two birds that did not necessarily fit with written descriptions of leucopareia geese were closely studied in Lake Dune on the 29th. These two geese lacked throat stripes, had longer bills, more rounded crowns, paler breasts (generally lacking a neck collar) and appeared slightly larger. The accepted variability within goose subspecies certainly needs more study. Much to our disappointment, the group of four Common Pochards was not seen this week. Tufted Ducks remain however, with sightings of up to 5 birds sporadically through the week. As is normal for the species they have settled into the islands deeper lakes, and move around quite a bit during

the course of a day. Puddle duck diversity remains high with a pair of American and a pair of Eurasian Wigeon, three Buffleheads, half a dozen Greater Scaup, two pairs of Northern Shoveler, and one pair of Mallards remaining through the week. As for sea ducks, King Eiders continue to be numerous, and a flock of 14 Steller's Eiders, with one apparent first year male have been appearing at seemingly random points around the north and northeast sections of the island. Very small numbers of White-winged (a pair 24th -28th) and Black Scoters (3 on the 25th) remain around the island's shores. Red-breasted Mergansers seem to be passing through with sporadic sightings of single birds or small groups.

SEABIRDS

With generally light to non-existent winds and calm seas it is not surprising that few true pelagic birds were found this week. One Short-tailed Shearwater and a single Sabine's Gull were seen on the 27th. Migrant jaegers were in evidence however with Long-tailed occurring on 4 days of the week, and a Parasitic on the 29th. A basic plumaged Common Loon was found at Webster Seawatch on the 26th and remained through the week's end. A few Pacific Loons were also found through the week, mostly in flight. Perhaps brought south into the central Bering Sea by this winter's large pack ice flows a basic Black Guillemot was seen off the tip of Northeast Point on the 28th. This represents only the second record of this species since 2000. The adult kamtschatschensis Mew Gull was last seen on the 24th. An adult short-billed (American) Mew Gull was found on Zapadni Beach on the 24th and again on the 28th. Black-headed Gulls were seen on the 24th and 28th. Undoubtedly the best seabird of the week was a beautiful adult ROSS'S GULL that remained for an afternoon of the 24th on the retreating ice in Big Lake. As one may deduce the 24th was the first day of calm sunny weather after last week's storm. The 25th-27th were very calm, resulting in a mass exodus of birds already on the island, and as the north winds picked up on the 28th a new crop of migrants arrived.

SHOREBIRDS

A nice mix of North American and Asian shorebirds arrived this week. Highlights from the Asian side of the Bering Sea included lingering Wood Sandpipers (high count of 10 on the 24th, down to 3 by week's end), a Common Greenshank (last seen on the 24th), Common Snipe (last seen on the 26th), Variegated Whimbrel (on the 29th), and a few Bar-tailed Godwits (1 on the 14th, and 38 on the 28th). Two, presumably newly arrived Common Sandpipers were found on the 30th. From North America, last week's influx of Dunlin continues, with up to 5 birds seen daily. An adult Black-bellied plover (Casual in the Prib's) was out at Northeast Point on the 28th, associating with one of the groups of Pacific Golden-Plovers that are frequenting the point. Also casual in the Pribilofs were a Greater Yellowlegs (25th), and a Semipalmated Sandpiper (28th-30th). More regular migrants included a Wilson's Snipe on the 28th, a Lesser Yellowlegs (almost annual here in spring) on the 28th and 29th, and scattered individual Western Sandpipers throughout the week. Red Phalarope numbers have plummeted with the nice weather. Our high count for the week was 70 on the 24th, with only a few singles seen after that date.

LANDBIRDS & PASSERINES

As was the case for other groups of birds this week we detected migrants from both sides of the Bering Sea. The Bird of the week honors must go to a WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE, found and well photographed on the 28th near Webster Lake. This represents the first record of this species in the offshore Bering Sea. The EYEBROWED THRUSH and Brambling of last week were last seen on the 24th. A single male Red-throated Pipit, casual here in spring

delighted birders at Sea Lion Neck on the 28th. North American passerines were legion this week with highlights including two American Tree Sparrows and a second Dark-eyed Junco for the spring. Both of these species had previously been detected less than 5 times in spring before. More regular birds included multiple Tree and Bank Swallows, two Hermit Thrushes (27th-29th), at least three American Pipits (27th-29th), a Savannah Sparrow (27th), Yellow-rumped and Wilson's Warblers (27th), Golden-crowned Sparrow (30th), and Hoary (29th-30th) and Common (27th) Redpolls. A Short-eared Owl was found on the 24th near Telegraph Hill, and a steady movement of Snowy Owls occurred through the week, with a high count of 3 on the 25th. As can clearly be seen a large influx of North American birds occurred on the 27th, which was the first day the North winds picked up in intensity.

Regularly occurring species now present on the island:

Northern Pintail

Green-winged (and Common) Teal

Greater Scaup

Common Goldeneye

King Eider (mainly winter resident)

Harlequin Duck

Long-tailed Duck

Horned Grebe

Red-necked Grebe

Northern Fulmar

Red-faced Cormorant

Pelagic Cormorant

Semipalmated Plover

Wandering Tattler (migrant)

Ruddy Turnstone (migrant)

Least Sandpiper

Rock Sandpiper (ssp. *ptilocnemis*)

Red-necked Phalarope

Glaucous-winged Gull

Black-legged Kittiwake

Red-legged Kittiwake

Common Murre

Thick-billed Murre

Pigeon Guillemot

Ancient Murrelet

Parakeet Auklet

Least Auklet

Crested Auklet

Tufted Puffin

Horned Puffin

Common Raven

Winter Wren (ssp. *alascensis*)

Lapland Longspur

Snow Bunting

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (ssp. *umbrina*)

For tour information or to make travel arrangements visit our website

<http://www.alaskabirding.com> or call 1-877-424-5637. This is Gavin Bieber (Kingbird77@hotmail.com), Dylan Radin, Andrew Keaveney and Joanna Klima, the 2006 St. Paul Island Tour guides, wishing you good birding.

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