



Birding the Alaskan Wilderness

A birding field tour with *Seven Ponds Nature Center & Rocky Mountain Birding*

May 31 - June 10, 2026



ITINERARY

May 31 – Arrivals, night in Anchorage

Plan to arrive at Anchorage International Airport (ANC) and transfer to our hotel that is just one mile from the airport, appropriately named the Puffin Inn. We'll gather for an early dinner at a nearby steakhouse where we'll enjoy our first meal together and review the trip itinerary. In the morning, we'll catch the first flight to Nome that departs at 7:30 AM.

June 1-5 – Birding Nome – night at Aurora Inn & Suites

The days of the gold rush have faded, although a few small mining operations remain active. Today, Nome serves as a gateway to the Alaskan wilderness, with more than 200 miles of maintained gravel roads providing access to many habitats including coastal wetlands, tundra, willow thicket, boreal forest and even alpine tundra. Several birds with limited nesting ranges in North America can be found in Nome such as **Arctic Loon, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Red-necked Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit, Slaty-backed Gull, Bluethroat, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail, Northern Wheatear, and Arctic Warbler**, to name a few! Nome also supports vast numbers of migrating and nesting shorebirds with highlights including **American Golden-Plover** and **Pacific Golden-Plover, Wandering**

Tattler, Black Turnstone, Surfbird, Whimbrel, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. The offshore waters, bays and lagoons offer great chances to view waterfowl, and all four species of eiders (**Steller's, Spectacled, King, Common**) are possible alongside **Harlequin Ducks** and **Long-tailed Ducks**, and four species of scoter, including the rare **Stejneger's Scoter**. Nome is also one of the few places where it's possible to see all five species of loons: Red-throated Loon and Pacific Loon are common while **Yellow-billed Loon** and **Arctic Loon** occur in small numbers. Ironically, **Common Loon** is the least common of the loons to see in Nome. In the interior, cliffs and rugged mountains support raptor populations with **Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl, Gyrfalcon,** and **Peregrine Falcon** all nesting. Lower lying tundra supports **Willow Ptarmigan** while upland areas hold the scarcer **Rock Ptarmigan**. Away from the coastline, alder thickets shelter warblers, sparrows, finches and thrushes including **Varied Thrush** and **Gray-cheeked Thrush; Northern Waterthrush, Orange-crowned, Yellow, Blackpoll, Yellow-rumped** and **Wilson's warblers; American Tree, Fox, White-crowned, Golden-crowned,** and **Savannah sparrows;** and **Redpolls**. Add to that **Lapland Longspur** and **Snow Bunting** plus chances for **Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, Bohemian Waxwing,** and even **Spruce Grouse**. Many large mammals including Muskox, Moose, Caribou and occasionally Brown "Grizzly" Bear are present as well, though not always seen.

From our base in Nome, we will explore each of the three roads that take us into the wilds: Teller Road extending northwest through tundra, Kougarak Road that winds north through tundra and rocky terrain en route to Coffee Dome (Bristle-thighed Curlew) and Council Road that hugs the coast on the way east to Safety Sound. We'll be looking for a long list of target species and there's always the chance for something rare.

June 5 – Return to Anchorage, and travel to Seward – night at the Breeze Inn, Seward

The drive from Anchorage south to Seward is beautiful if the weather cooperates. We will make a stop at Potter Marsh where a Falcated Duck was seen in June 2019, and stop at Beluga Point to scan for Beluga Whales and perhaps see Dall's Sheep on the nearby rocks. The Seward Highway winds us through the northernmost extent of the Pacific coastal rainforest, and we could see **Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Steller's Jay, crossbills, Townsend's Warbler** and other species typical of the temperate forest.

There are many lakes, ponds and marshes along the way to tempt us as we continue south. Near Moose Pass the steep mountains covered in Sitka spruce and western hemlock meet Resurrection Bay, providing salmon with numerous rivers for spawning. We'll check into the Breeze Inn with some time before dinner.

June 6 – Kenai Fjords National Park – night at the Breeze Inn, Seward

After breakfast, we'll board our boat for an 8.5-hour pelagic tour that will take us into Kenai Fjords National Park. We'll view three glaciers including the impressive Northwestern Glacier with its blue-green ice flowing directly to the sea. Our target birds are many: **Common Murre** and **Thick-billed Murre, Tufted Puffin** and **Horned Puffin, Pigeon Guillemot, Marbled Murrelet** and **Kittlitz's Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet** and **Parakeet Auklets, Red-faced Cormorant** and more. **Short-billed Gull** and **Black-legged Kittiwake** are the most common gulls here. We should also see Steller's sea lions, sea otters, harbor seals and perhaps humpback whales or orcas.

June 7 – Seward to Homer – night at the Driftwood Inn, Homer

Today we'll journey from Seward to Homer, backtracking north to Tern Lake, then heading west along the Sterling Highway. The road hugs the Kenai River and offers many opportunities to search for birds and wildlife as we take in the scenery. When we arrive, we may opt to stretch our legs a bit with a walk on the spit, if the tide is right, or we'll check Bishop's Beach.

June 8 – Homer – night at the Driftwood Inn, Homer

After breakfast we'll board our boat for a mini pelagic tour of Kachemak Bay. One of the highlights will be viewing the 15,000+ birds that nest on Gull Island. We should have close looks at **Red-faced Cormorant, Common Murre,**

Pigeon Guillemot, Tufted Puffin and perhaps a **Horned Puffin** as well. **Glaucous-winged Gulls** and **Black-legged Kittiwakes** are thick here, and there's a chance to spot a **Wandering Tattler** on a falling tide.

In the afternoon we'll explore the spit and Mud Bay. The tidal ranges here exceed 20 feet, which affects the birding dramatically. The exposed mudflats attract huge numbers of migrating shorebirds from **Least Sandpipers** to **Hudsonian Godwits** and sometimes **Bar-tailed Godwits**. **Black Turnstone, Red Knot, Black-bellied Plover** and **Semipalmated Plover, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher**, and **Western Sandpiper** are all possible. We'll keep an eye out for a lingering **Rock Sandpiper** in breeding plumage.

June 9 – Homer to Anchorage – night at the Puffin Inn

It's a four-hour drive back to Anchorage. We will plan our route depending on any birds we may have missed, or any locations we may want to explore further. Once we arrive back in Anchorage, we'll check back into the Puffin Inn with a little time to relax before our farewell dinner!

June 10 – Departures

Our departures will likely be staggered depending on each person's flight schedule. The hotel offers a free shuttle, so we can arrange timing with them in advance.



Pricing:

- The tour cost is \$7,550 per person, double occupancy.
- The tour is limited to six participants, and due to the very high cost of lodging, everyone will need to share a room on this tour.

Included in the tour cost:

- Accommodations for 11-days, 10-nights
- All meals starting with dinner on May 31 through breakfast on June 10
- Roundtrip airfare from Anchorage to Nome and back to Anchorage
- Ground transportation
- Professional guiding services
- Park entry fees
- eBird checklist sharing
- Trip Report

Not included:

- Airfare to and from Anchorage Ted Stevens International Airport (ANC)
- Transportation from the airport to the Puffin Inn on May 31
- Personal items such as alcohol with meals, laundry, etc.

General Information:

Temperatures in June in the Anchorage area and along the Kenai Peninsula are surprisingly pleasant, with daytime highs ranging from the mid-50s to the high 60s. Nome tends to be much cooler, with highs in the 40s and lows in the 30s. Wind can make a big difference of course, so having layers including a light down jacket or vest and a sturdy windbreaker with backup hat and gloves is wise.

It will be daylight nearly around the clock, so you may want to bring something to cover your eyes when you sleep. The Alaska sun can be intense in the middle of the day, so bring sunblock and lip balm, or we can purchase some locally. Mosquito repellent is also a good idea!

We urge you to pack as lightly as possible as the flight to Nome is on a smaller plane. Soft-sided bags make packing the vehicles easier.