

**Bird-Finding Guide
to
Denali National Park**



**Bird-Finding Guide
to
Denali National Park**



Written by Kenneth Kertell and Alan Seegert

Project coordination by Catherine Rezabeck

Cover and title page art by Donna Gates

Map art by Kathryn Maurich

**Published by the Alaska Natural History Association
in cooperation with the National Park Service**

**Copyright 1984 by the
Alaska Natural History Association**

Introduction

Denali National Park is the home of a fascinating assemblage of boreal birds. Those capable of withstanding the rigors of winter are joined in spring by a variety of exotic migrants forming a richly cosmopolitan avifauna. By the end of May, resident willow ptarmigan and hawk-owls are "rubbing shoulders" with wheatears from Africa, arctic terns from Antarctica, and long-tailed jaegers from the southern Pacific Ocean. These and many others find suitable habitat in a vast wilderness park.

Because of its accessibility, Denali is also a popular gathering place for birders. Unfortunately, birders with limited time are often frustrated by a lack of readily available bird-finding information. In response, this guide has been created to provide habitat information and a list of locations where the most commonly sought birds have been consistently seen in the past. It is primarily designed for locating birds close to the park road, both for convenience and because the road provides access to an excellent representation of the park habitat types, ranging from spruce forest to alpine tundra slopes. Habitat and location descriptions are followed by current identification tips not found

in the standard field guides. In instances where field marks are adequately treated by the popular guides, information is designed to provide an insight into various aspects of the ecology, taxonomy, and migratory routes of a species.

To reach the locations mentioned in the text you will be largely dependent on the park shuttle bus system. Specify where you would like to be dropped off and your bus driver will be happy to accommodate you. Remember, however, that you will then need to wait for the next bus with available seating, so be flexible. Some drivers have a specific interest in birds and will stop more readily than others to observe birds from the bus, enabling you to see the more conspicuous species without exiting. It may be worth your time to inquire as to which drivers are birders and when they are scheduled to drive. The front few seats afford the best visibility and the best chance to interact with the driver.

Birders with no prior experience in the far north may find certain aspects of the Denali environment disconcerting. When compared to more southerly locations, for example, the park flora is lacking in both species diversity and structural complexity. The resultant habitat homogeneity is reflected in relatively few bird species (158) and in low overall density. The Denali birder can often walk long distances with limited success. Also, because summer days are extremely long and activity peaks are less distinct than in areas with well-defined photo-

periods, birders are often fooled into thinking that northern birds share their bouts of insomnia. However, even in the almost continuous daylight of the subarctic summer, light intensity decreases at "night" and bird activity declines or increases accordingly.

With the publication of a bird-finding guide comes a greater potential for abuse. We have deliberately omitted information on traditional raptor nest sites in order to minimize the possibility of disturbance. We ask that you do not approach raptor nests closer than 100 meters, and that you exercise restraint and good judgement in the use of tapes and cameras when observing any of the park birds.

Bring warm clothes and rain gear, and be alert to the fact that your quest for birds will often lead you into moose and bear habitat. Consult the **Denali Alpenglöw** for current advice on behavior in bear country.

Phylogenetic sequence and nomenclature follow the **American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds**, Sixth edition (1983).

Good birding!

Harlequin Duck
Histrionicus histrionicus

Habitat: Turbulent mountain streams.

Locations: Lower Caribou Creek (where it enters the Savage River) is especially good; Savage River; Igloo Creek; Stony Creek.

The male harlequin is best viewed from May to mid-June riding the rapids of clear alpine streams, often beside the beautiful, olive brown female. Although a fairly common summer resident, the nest, lined by the female with her breast and belly down, has only been found along Tattler and Caribou Creeks. The Tattler Creek nest was placed under a willow about 100 feet from the river and 20 feet up a bank.

Oldsquaw
Clangula hyemalis

Habitat: Lakes, Ponds.

Locations: Big Railroad Lake; Tundra Ponds.

Oldsquaws are migrants at the east end of the park from May to mid-June, and can usually be found nesting in the Tundra Ponds at the west end.

Because of the highly acidic nature of subarctic soils and water bodies, few good duck food plants line the taiga and tundra ponds of Denali. As a result, granivorous ducks are largely replaced by invertebrate eating divers like the oldsquaw. The melodious "ow-ow-owdle-ow" call of the oldsquaw is one of the most thrilling bird sounds to be heard in the northern wilderness.

Barrow's Goldeneye
Bucephala islandica

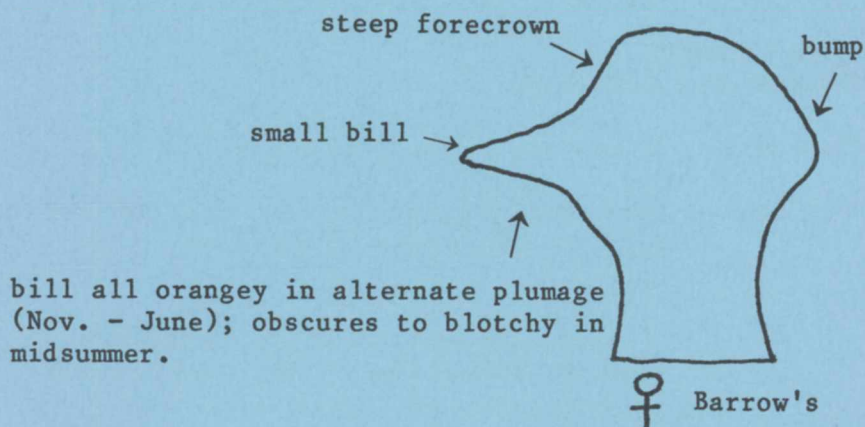
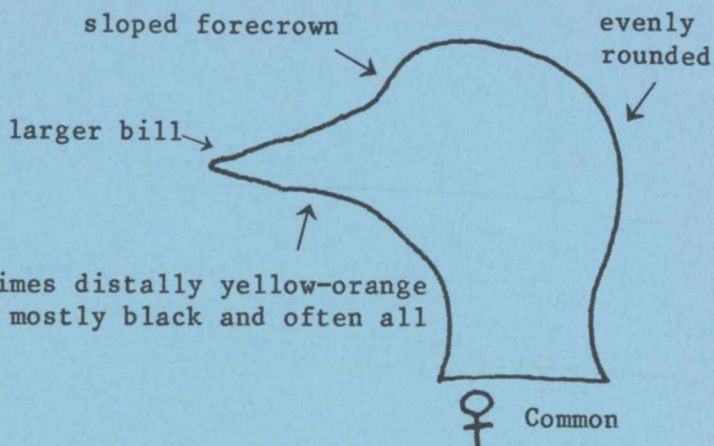
Habitat: Lakes, Ponds.

Locations: Big Railroad Lake; Horseshoe Lake;
Tundra Ponds.

The Barrow's goldeneye is a fairly common migrant at the park's east end from May to mid-June, and is frequently seen in the Tundra Ponds during the summer. Although largely a tree cavity nester, its ability to use other substrates has been documented elsewhere. In the park, Adolph Murie reported a female lighting on the stovepipe chimney of his Igloo Creek cabin, and another circling the cliffs of Igloo Mountain. Its occurrence in open country ponds also indicates possible ground nesting in the Wonder Lake area.

Because common goldeneyes are seen in the spring, the following head and bill characteristics should prove useful in the separation of common and Barrow's females.

See top of next page for drawing



Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*

Habitat: Open expanses of alpine tundra.

Locations: From Polychrome Pass to the Eielson Visitor Center area offers many miles of good habitat.

Because intermediate "gray phase" birds are to be expected in the park, birders occasionally confuse the gyrfalcon (JER-fall-kon) with the peregrine falcon, which has not been found nesting in Denali. Distinguishing between peregrines and gyrs is an underrated identification problem. The gyrfalcon lacks the very dark upperparts and dramatically contrasting facial markings of the peregrine. In flight, gyrfalcons have a slower, shallower wingbeat and noticeably wider wings than do peregrines. Also, while at rest the wingtips of the gyrfalcon do not reach the end of the tail as they do on the peregrine.

Spruce Grouse
Dendragapus canadensis

Habitat: Extensive, dense spruce woods.

Locations: Park Headquarters to mile 6; either side of Teklanika Campground; Denali Forest.

Spruce grouse are often difficult to locate. After the fledglings are out in July, however, they sometimes frequent roadsides in the early morning. Although they generally replenish their gizzard pebbles from stream beds or natural banks, the park road has unintentionally provided the gravel needed for trituration, particularly when grouse are making the digestive transition from soft summer foods to their winter diet of spruce needles.

Willow Ptarmigan
Lagopus lagopus

Habitat: Vegetated river bars (like Savage River); roadsides; brushy ravines above treeline.

Locations: Mile 6 to Teklanika Campground; Wonder Lake area.

Willow ptarmigan are best viewed in April and May when the males advertise their territories from the roadside or from the tops of low spruce trees. They are much less conspicuous when the female is incubating, but again frequent the roadside around mid-July when families appear. By late August, families band together to form flocks which often reach considerable size in winter.

See rock ptarmigan account for field identification.

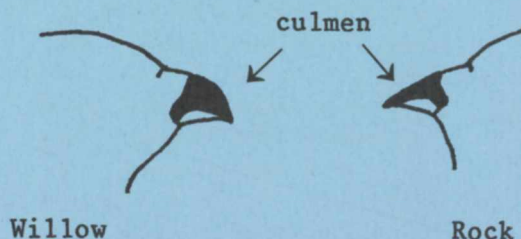
Rock Ptarmigan
Lagopus mutus

Habitat: Alpine tundra slopes with low vegetation. Overlaps willow in some locations, like Highway and Thorofare Passes, but can usually be separated by habitat, with willow preferring brushy draws in such situations.

Locations: Upper slopes of Primrose Ridge; upper Highway Pass; Thorofare Pass; Stony Hill; slopes above Eielson Visitor Center.

The separation of willow and rock ptarmigan can often prove to be a challenge. The spring identification of males is facilitated by the diagnostic black eye line of the rock and by its slower acquisition of summer plumage. Unlike the male willow, which has a brown head by early April, the male rock retains its white plumage until early June. (Females show a more synchronized molt.) In summer plumage, males remain fairly easily separable: the male rock is much grayer than the reddish male willow, and shows more prominent barring on the upper breast and belly. Females, however, molt into very similar summer plumage and, as in winter, are difficult to distinguish. In order to safely identify females in all seasons, and as an aid in the separation of males, a close look at the bill is very helpful. Compared to the willow, the rock bill shows less depth at the base and has a less abruptly curved culmen. The difference is not hard to see with a little comparative experience (see below).

When hiking along rocky ridgetops, especially near glaciers and permanent snowfields, keep a sharp eye out for the rarely seen white-tailed ptarmigan.



Lesser Golden-Plover
Pluvialis dominica

Habitat: Hummocky, dry alpine tundra flats.

Locations: Top of Primrose Ridge; upper Highway Pass; Little Stony Creek flats below Stony Hill is especially good; Stony Hill.

Lesser golden-plovers nesting in the park are probably the nominate subspecies P.d. dominica as opposed to the Pacific form, fulva, which nests on the north and west coasts of Alaska. A specimen from the park identified as fulva was listed by A. Murie in **Birds of Mount McKinley**. However, date of collection, source of identification, and location of specimen were not mentioned. Fulva is smaller, more brightly colored, and the white on the forehead, supercilia, and sides of neck and breast is generally less extensive than on dominica. Unlike dominica, the white in fulva usually extends as a broken or spotted line through the flanks. (See below.) For additional information see A. Pym, "Identification of Lesser Golden Plover and Status in Britain and Ireland," **British Birds** 75:112-124, 1982.

Dominica performs a remarkable loop migration, assembling in Labrador for an overwater flight to Brazil and then to the Argentine pampas wintering grounds. In spring they travel through Central America to the Gulf of Mexico, then up the Mississippi Valley to the tundra breeding grounds. Fulva, on the

other hand, migrates across the Pacific to the wintering grounds in southeast Asia and throughout the central and southern Pacific.

Dominica



Fulva



Wandering Tattler
Heteroscelus incanus

Habitat: River bars along generally small streams above treeline.

Locations: Igloo Creek (upstream from Igloo Campground); Tattler Creek is especially good; Stony and Little Stony Creeks; Bergh Lake.

The nesting grounds of the wandering tattler and the surfbird were secrets well kept by interior Alaska's long-standing isolation and rigorous terrain. It wasn't until 1923 that Olaus and Adolph Murie found Alaska's first reported tattler nest some distance above the mouth of Jenny Creek on the Savage River. Since then it has been found to be a fairly common nesting bird in the park and elsewhere in interior Alaska.

Upland Sandpiper
Bartramia longicauda

Habitat: Open, often grassy slopes, and large dry river terraces covered with grasses and/or Dryas spp.

Locations: Erratic Ridge is particularly good, although some distance from the road; flats on the west side of the west branch of the Toklat River about one mile south of the road; flats on the east side of the east fork of the Toklat River just south of the road; ridges above the Tundra Ponds.

When disturbed near the nest the upland sandpiper flies close to the ground with short rapid beats of its down-curved wings (much like the spotted sandpiper), and often alights atop a willow with the wings held high above the back for a few seconds. On the ground it runs swiftly and stops suddenly in a plover-like fashion. In the autumn the upland sandpiper migrates through the interior of North America on the way to its wintering grounds on the pampas of southern South America.

Surfbird
Aphriza virgata

Habitat: Rocky ridgetops and alpine tundra at high elevations.

Locations: Top of Primrose Ridge; Stony Dome; ridges above the Eielson Visitor Center; upper Glacier Creek.

Birding in Denali National Park is thrilling, not only from the standpoint of its natural beauty, but from an historical perspective as well. Upon first viewing a surfbird, one is easily transported to that moment only 50 years ago when Joseph Dixon and George Wright discovered the first surfbird nest known to science on a high, windswept ridge in Denali National Park. The records of subsequent ornithologists indicate that its breeding range is confined to the mountains of south-central Alaska, in contrast to its wintering grounds which stretch along the Pacific coast from south-eastern Alaska to the Straits of Magellan.

Long-tailed Jaeger
Stercorarius longicaudus

Habitat: Dry or marshy tundra flats.

Locations: Top of Primrose Ridge; between Savage and Sanctuary Rivers; Highway Pass to Thorofare Pass.

Despite a preference for microtine rodents, the smaller size and agility of long-tailed jaegers (compared to parasitics and pomarines) allows them to exploit avian and insect prey as

well. As a result, they are able to inhabit areas like Denali National Park where rodent populations do not build up to the superabundant "highs" characteristic of more arctic situations.

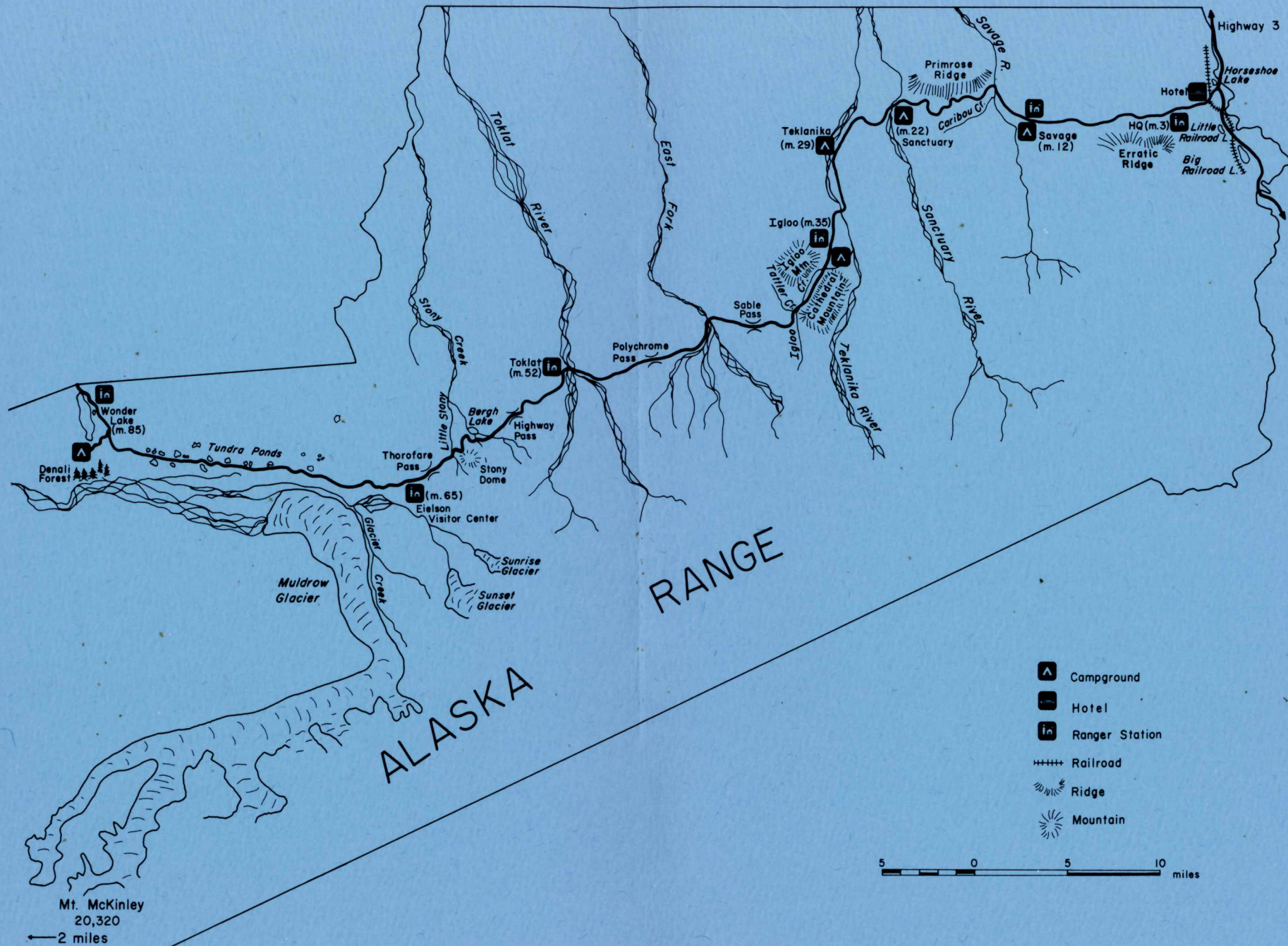
The long-tailed is the only jaeger to be expected in Denali. However, young and molting adults with only partly developed tails are sometimes mistaken for light phase parasitics. The adult long-tailed can be distinguished by the lack of any suggestion of a breast band, and the lack of white on the underwings. The juvenile long-tailed is grayer than the juvenile parasitic (which is rufous-brown) and lacks barring on the belly. Long-tailed jaegers show a strong contrast between the grayish mantle and the darker flight feathers in all plumages.

Arctic Tern
Sterna paradisaea

Habitat: Marshy edges of lakes and ponds.

Locations: South shore of Wonder Lake; Tundra Ponds.

Arctic terns perform one of the longest migrations of any bird. Those nesting in the park winter in subantarctic and antarctic waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and occasionally to the shores of the Antarctic continent itself. A tern banded in Alaska was recently recaptured ten years later in the same area, indicating a minimum of ten round trip flights. Because they summer in the extreme north and "winter" in the ex-



treme south, arctic terns probably see more daylight during their lives than any other animal.

Northern Hawk-Owl ***Surnia ulula***

Habitat: Spruce forest bordering open tundra or open spruce bogs.

Locations: Park Headquarters to mile 6; two miles east of the Teklanika Campground to Igloo Campground.

The northern hawk-owl is well named. Although a true owl, it is structurally and behaviorally adapted for hunting by sight in the fashion of a diurnal falconiform. Indeed, the hawk-owl appears to be an ecological substitute for a diurnal falcon or large accipiter (despite its habit of feeding on small mammals). Although nesting success depends on numbers of voles, of which the red-backed vole (Clethrionomys rutilus) is the most important, hawk-owls also take shrews, birds, red squirrels (Tamasciurus hudsonicus), and young snowshoe hares (Lepus americanus) in the park.

During years of high vole density hawk-owls are commonly seen during the day perched atop spruce snags along the park road, but after a rodent "crash" they, like short-eared owls, can be difficult to locate. When present they can often be found by listening for the alarm calls of mobbing American robins, varied thrushes, and gray jays, which often pursue them mercilessly.

Boreal Owl
Aegolius funereus

Habitat: Spruce and spruce-poplar woods.

Locations: Park Headquarters; near the Savage River Campground; near the Toklat Ranger Station.

Unlike hawk-owls, boreal owls are nocturnal and very inconspicuous during the day, perching in the thick foliage of shrubs or trees. As a result, they are best located in early spring (April to early May) when the adults are calling, or when the noisy young have fledged in early to mid-July. Like hawk-owls, boreal owls stay through the winter and feed on microtine rodents, which are often forced to the snow's surface in search of oxygen by the periodic accumulations of carbon dioxide gas below.

Three-toed Woodpecker
Picoides tridactylus

Habitat: Mature spruce forest at low elevations.

Locations: Between Park Headquarters and mile 6; drive 15 miles south of the park entrance along Highway 3 and stop in the vicinity of Carlo Creek.

Despite fairly extensive spruce woodland at the park's east entrance, northern three-toed woodpeckers are less numerous than one might expect. This fact, coupled with their retiring habit and quiet nature make their detection a challenge for the birder.

They can best be located from mid-March to early May when adults are often heard drumming on favorite spruce snags. Look also for feeding stations where bark has been chipped away from tree trunks and accumulates below.

Siberian Tit
Parus cinctus

Habitat: Willow brush and low density spruce forest at treeline, and in willow vegetated gullies above treeline. Willows seem to be necessary but spruce do not.

Locations: Reportedly seen near Savage Campground, at Sanctuary Campground, and near Wonder Lake.

There are no specimen records or photographic records of Siberian tits for the Alaska Range. Denali National Park is probably at the southern edge of the species range, making it extremely rare or nonexistent here. (In Denali National Park, Siberian tits are to be expected only in winter.) To make matters worse, the illustrations of boreal chickadees and Siberian tits in **Birds of North America** and in Peterson's **A Field Guide to Western Birds** are misleading. For a much better representation of the two species see Godfrey's **The Birds of Canada**, the Pough field guides, and the **Field Guide to the Birds of North America** (National Geographic Society).

The major distinction between the boreal chickadee and the Siberian tit

is the extent of the white cheek patch. In the Siberian tit the white face patch is larger, extending well back onto the nape, and has a sharply defined rear border. (In the boreal the patch is small and is limited to the front part of the sides of the head.) Also, the Siberian tit has a proportionately longer tail, and broad, grayish-white edges to the greater wing coverts. (The greater coverts of the boreal are uniformly gray, without any pale edges.)

For further information on locations, habitat, identification, and voice see L. G. Balch, "Mystery Bird of the North: The Gray-headed Chickadee," *Birding* 12:126-131, 1980.

Boreal Chickadee
Parus hudsonicus

Habitat: Fairly dense spruce forest.

Locations: Hotel area; Park Headquarters to mile 6; Savage, Sanctuary, and Teklanika Campgrounds; Denali Forest.

Boreal chickadees are often mistaken for Siberian tits by birders who go by flank and crown colors alone. Although the flank color of the boreal is typically richer and browner than that of the Siberian tit, it is more so after the adult acquires fresh plumage through its post-nuptial molt in August. Also, the juvenile boreal has pale pinkish-buff flanks, not greatly different from those of the Siberian tit, and its crown is grayer than the adult's, again making it similar to the Siberian tit. It is perhaps no coinci-

dence that visiting birders often turn in reports of Siberian tits about the time that young boreals are leaving the nest.

Although the most common chickadee in Denali, boreals are often difficult to locate from late May to mid-July when adults are attentive to nests. By September, boreals are often outnumbered by black-capped chickadees in the Park Headquarters area.

Arctic Warbler
Phylloscopus borealis

Habitat: Large willows along creeks near tree-line.

Locations: Igloo Creek (begin at Igloo Campground and walk upstream along the road, or begin at Tattler Creek and walk downstream); west of Toklat River (begin at Toklat Ranger Station and walk west along the road).

Like the wheatear, the arctic warbler is an Old World land bird (Muscicapidae) that originated in Siberia and established itself in Alaska following the last great ice age. In autumn, the entire Alaskan population returns to eastern Asia via the Bering Strait, before flying south with the Siberian population to the wintering grounds in southeastern China, Indonesia, the Phillipines, and Borneo.

A late spring migrant, the arctic warbler is not seen consistently until mid-June when it becomes a common bird

along Igloo Creek and elsewhere. At this time it sings tirelessly and can be heard all day and into the evening.

In 1955 Adolph Murie found the first two North American nests of this species among the willows along Igloo Creek. One was in the opening of a rodent tunnel, and the other on the moss-covered ground. In both cases the nest was dome-shaped, made of fine grass and caribou hair, roofed over with loosely piled moss, and was entered from one side.

Northern Wheatear
Oenanthe oenanthe

Habitat: Rock outcrops bordering alpine tundra.

Locations: Upper Tattler Creek; Polychrome Pass; Bergh Lake-Stony Creek area; either side of the Eielson Visitor Center.

As glaciers receded at the end of the last ice age new subarctic habitats were made available for birds. However, range extensions into these unoccupied habitats were not always in the direction of the chief migration axis. The wheatear, for example, extended its range into North America both from the west, via Siberia into Alaska, and from the east, via Greenland into Labrador and Quebec. As a result, when Alaskan wheatears are ready to migrate "south" in the autumn they do not strike out on a direct and shorter new route through North America. Instead, they join relatives in Siberia before flying south along the ancestral pathway across Asia to

their African wintering grounds. In this way they are similar to the gray-cheeked thrushes which return from Siberia to eastern North America before moving south.

Buffy female and immature wheatears can be easily identified by the upright stance and the white rump and tail (the latter with a broad inverted black "T".) Immature wheatears are commonly seen along the road in the vicinity of the Eielson Visitor Center in early August.

Townsend's Solitaire
Myadestes townsendi

Habitat: Rocky slopes of cliffs near treeline.

Locations: Tattler Creek; Stony Creek; lower Savage Canyon.

Because of its western range, sparse distribution, and retiring habits, the Townsend's solitaire generates much interest among visiting birders, particularly those from the East Coast and from overseas. At first sighting this rather odd thrush may be confused with an unidentified thrasher or flycatcher. In the park, its nest has been found in a stump cavity, among the roots of a fallen tree, and in a rock crevice.

Catharus thrushes:
Hermit C. guttatus
Swainson's C. ustulatus
Gray-checked C. mimimus

Habitat: Mixed spruce-poplar or spruce woodland,
and tall deciduous shrubbery.

Locations: Riley Creek to mile 6; Sanctuary and
Teklanika Campgrounds; Denali Forest.

The following tabulation of field characteristics may prove useful when attempting to identify Catharus thrushes. Although these three species are, outwardly, very much alike and nest in close proximity, dissimilar courtship patterns and habitat preferences keep them from interbreeding.

Swainson's is the common thrush in the forested regions of the park (Riley Creek to mile 6; Teklanika Campground), while gray-cheeked is predominant in treeline willow thickets (Wonder Lake area).

Turn page for identification chart

Thrush Identification:

Hermit

tail and
upperparts

rusty-red tail
contrasting with
gray upperparts

underparts

boldly spotted
breast

head

thin white eye
ring

behavior

wing flicking
habit

call

low "chup" or
"chup-chup"

song

loud repetitive
phrases spiraling
up the scale,
with the first
note of each
phrase lower and
longer than the
rest of the notes

Swainson's

brown back and
tail

moderately spotted
breast washed
with buff, buffy
flanks

bold buffy eye
ring and buffy
cheeks, buffy up-
per breast

soft "wink" or
"wick"

flutelike phrases
starting with a
clear long note
on one pitch,
then spiraling up
the scale and
becoming fainter
until the last
notes fade out

Gray-cheeked

evenly colored
gray-brown upper-
parts (looks
"cold" while
Swainson's looks
"warm")

boldly spotted
breast (washed w/
pale yellowish-
olive on fall
immatures), dull
slate-gray flanks

no eye ring or a
very thin white
eye ring (much
less distinct
than Hermit),
gray cheek and
crown

down slurred
"wheer"

thin nasal "wee-
oh, chee, chee,
wee-oh" with a
rising inflection
at the end

Varied Thrush
Ixoreus naevius

Habitat: Dense spruce forest with lush under-story.

Locations: Park Headquarters to mile 6.

The varied thrush is best located in May and June when its song, delivered largely at dawn and dusk, mingles with the songs of Denali's other woodland thrushes. The weird ventriloquial quality of its voice has generated some fine descriptive writing. According to Grinnell, "It is an odd bird song, but when heard amid the solitude of the dark, damp spruce woods, it has an indescribably melancholy quality, which sets one to dreaming of far away home. Many a half-hour have I spend lying on my back on a mossy hummock in the northern forest, mesmerized, as it were, by this hypnotizer of the woods."

Bohemian Waxwing
Bombycilla garrulus

Habitat: Generally sparse spruce woods at low elevations.

Locations: Hotel area to mile 6; Denali Forest.

Bohemian waxwings are regularly seen in small flocks during the summer, often sallying out for insects from the tops of spruce trees. Although larger flocks in fall often include many juvenal plumaged birds, breeding records are limited to two nests found in white spruce trees near Park Headquarters.

Northern Shrike
Lanius excubitor

Habitat: Brushy tundra and open spruce forest.

Locations: Mile 6 to the Savage Campground; Igloo Creek Canyon; Polychrome Pass; east side of Highway Pass.

When shrikes reach the park in late April or May they feed largely from the flocks of early arriving passerines. As the spring progresses they concentrate on displaying male birds and on microtines which have been exposed by the melting snow. By June, emerging worker bumblebees are much sought after. When fledgling songbirds appear on the tundra in early July, adult shrikes return to an avian diet, and in autumn, both adult and immature shrikes shadow the flocks of passerines that are building up prior to fall migration.

The bulky nest of the northern shrike has been found in spruce trees and in willows above treeline.

Lapland Longspur
Calcarius lapponicus

Habitat: Open, hummocky alpine tundra slopes.

Locations: Top of Primrose Ridge; Highway Pass to Thorofare Pass; ridges behind the Eielson Visitor Center.

In the short vegetation of Denali's extensive low alpine and moist tundra flats, savannah sparrows and Lapland longspurs are the main representatives

of a rather depauperate passerine fauna. However, visiting birders are seldom disappointed by the lack of species after hearing the male Lapland longspur pour out his delightful, tinkling song while gently floating to the ground on set wings.

Snow Bunting
Plectrophenax nivalis

Habitat: Rocky ridges and alpine tundra slopes at high elevations and often near permanent snowfields.

Locations: Occasionally atop Primrose Ridge; lower Muldrow Glacier (where covered by detritus and partially vegetated); Sunrise or Sunset Glaciers; upper Glacier Creek.

Snow buntings are one of the park's earliest spring migrants, often arriving in early April. As such, they are a sure harbinger of spring. Two nests discovered in a rock slide along upper Glacier Creek were lined with Dall sheep hair. Elsewhere they have incorporated the fur of foxes, lemmings, and hares, and the feathers of ptarmigan, jaegers, gulls, and snowy owls.

Rosy Finch
Leucosticte arctoa

Habitat: Rocky ridges and alpine tundra slopes at high elevations, and often near snowfields or glaciers.

Locations: Often found through late June on slopes of Cathedral or Sable Mountains, or upper Tattler Creek; some summers seen in hills above the Eielson Visitor Center or around the Visitor Center itself; generally easy to see if one hikes to Sunrise or Sunset Glaciers, or upper Glacier Creek (all opposite Eielson).

Rosy finches nest in cliff crevices or rock slides. Despite a preference for plant seeds during most of the year, they often are seen picking invertebrates off the surface of the snow when there are nestlings to feed. Because cold alpine temperatures limit invertebrate growth, rosy finches are partially dependent on "arthropod fallout": insects and spiders that have hatched at lower elevations and have been carried by the wind to the high ridges and deposited in the snow. This "fallout" provides birds with a proteinaceous food source otherwise absent at high elevations.

White-winged Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*

Habitat: Open coniferous or mixed woodlands.

Locations: Riley Creek-Hotel area to mile 6; Wonder Lake area.

Crossbills, like pine siskins, are members of the Carduelinae, a subfamily of irruptive seed and bud eating fringillids that are thought to have evolved in the temperate forests of the Old World. Because white-winged crossbills are spruce seed specialists they,

like other cardueline finches, have had to forsake the geographic fixity of most species in favor of a nomadic habit. This habit insures their survival in the face of widespread seed crop failures. As a result, although their numbers vary according to the availability of food, they can be expected at any time of the year in the Denali area, particularly late in the summer of years when spruce cones are abundant.

Common Redpoll
Carduelis flammea

Habitat: Willow brush above or below treeline.

Locations: May be seen or heard from most locations where the park road intersects willow vegetation.

Although large flocks of redpolls are seen in the spring, often only the "sw-e-et" call is heard as birds fly high overhead in summer.

The most useful feature in separating hoary from common redpolls is the combination of an unstreaked pale rump and pure white, unstreaked undertail coverts in the former. The hoary also has a shorter bill and a "pushed in" face. Some authorities consider the two redpolls to be a single species. (Records of hoary redpolls in Denali National Park are limited to occasional winter and early spring sightings.)

Index

Bird	Page
Introduction _____	2
Harlequin Duck _____	5
Oldsquaw _____	5
Barrow's Goldeneye _____	6
Gyr Falcon _____	7
Spruce Grouse _____	8
Willow Ptarmigan _____	9
Rock Ptarmigan _____	9
Lesser Golden Plover _____	11
Wandering Tattler _____	12
Upland Sandpiper _____	13
Surfbird _____	14
Long-tailed Jaeger _____	14
Arctic Tern _____	15
Park Map _____	16
Northern Hawk-Owl _____	18
Boreal Owl _____	19
Three-toed Woodpecker _____	19
Siberian Tit _____	20
Boreal Chickadee _____	21
Arctic Warbler _____	22
Northern Wheatear _____	23
Townsend's Solitaire _____	24
Catharus thrushes _____	25
Thrush Identification Chart _____	26
Varied Thrush _____	28
Bohemian Waxwing _____	28
Northern Shrike _____	29
Lapland Longspur _____	29
Snow Bunting _____	30
Rosy Finch _____	30
White-winged Crossbill _____	31
Common Redpoll _____	32



ISBN #0-9602876-7-1

