SUMMARY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRD OBSERVATIONS:
SPRING SEASON—March to May 2011

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This report summarizes bird sightings from Southeast Alaska for the spring season, which covered March to May 2011, and is intended to provide interesting observations for inclusion in an Alaska-wide column written by Thede Tobish for the journal *North American Birds* (published by the American Birding Association http://www.aba.org/). Generally we report on sightings of birds that are out of range or out of season, noteworthy breeding records, unusually large or small numbers of a particular species, unusual migration dates, etc., and so on, and so forth.

March and April 2011 were colder and drier than average, and May was colder than normal in southern Southeast. As a result, migration was on the late side this spring, particularly for April migrants. The highlight species included a Eurasian Bullfinch at Petersburg (2nd Southeast record), a Cape May Warbler near Juneau (8th Alaska record), Spotted Towhee (11th Alaska record), and Clay-colored Sparrow (10th Alaska record). Other nice finds were Tufted Duck, Black-headed Gull, Black-backed Woodpecker, and Smith’s Longspur. Observers in Juneau and Gustavus made interesting recoveries of banded Black-bellied Plover, Red Knot, and Glaucous-winged Gull.

We would like to thank all of the people that directly sent us observations, shared their photographs, and answered our inquiries about their sightings, all of whom are cited below. We received extensive reports from Nat Drumheller (Gustavus), Matt Goff (Sitka), and Rich Gordon (Juneau), and benefited from access to sightings entered into eBird (www.ebird.org) which we’ve incorporated into this report (much of the information from the Juneau area was obtained from eBird). We forwarded all the notes and photographs that we received to Thede as well. Finally, Matt Goff, Mark Schwan, Paul Suchanek, Nat Drumheller, and Gus van Vliet provided information and reviews of the final draft of this summary.

Names and Initials of observers cited in the text or who reported sightings: Robert H. Armstrong (RHA), Pam Bealer (PB), Ernie DeBoer (ED), Diana Braun (DB), Barbara Conine (BC), Lucas H. DeCicco (LHD), Nat K. Drumheller (NKD), Tana M. Ellis (TME), Marilyn Enright (ME), Cheryl A. Fultz (CAF), Matt R. Goff (MRG), Richard J. Gordon (RJG), Nick R. Hajdukovich (NRH), Mary-Claire Harris (MCH), Steven C. Heinl (SCH), Susan Hoyt (SH), Laura Huffine (LH), Patricia S. Hunt (PSH), J. Tom Hunt (JTH), Jerrold F. Koerner (JFK), Paul E. Lehman (PEL), Jim H. Lewis (JHL), Richard E. Lowell (REL), Deanna K. McPhail (DKM), Ken E. Mix (KEM), Brendan Moynahan (BM), Paul H. Norwood (PHN), Bruce B. Paige (BBP), Bill H. Pawuk (BHP), W. Larry Peavler (LWP), Andrew W. Piston (AWP), Lucy Pizzuto-Phillips (LPP), Laura W. Plamondon (LWP), Dave K. Porter (DKP), Kathy M. Riple (KMR), Patty A. Rose (PAR), Mark W. Schwan (MWS), Mike Smith (MS), Sheila Spores (SS), William Stortz (WS), Paul M. Suchanek (PMS), Marlys E. Tedin (MET), Mike Toochin (MT), Sharon Toochin (ST), Phoebe B. S. Vanselow (PBSV), Gus B. van Vliet (GBV), Marge L. Ward (MLW), Edwin Winkel (EW), Will T. Young (WTY).
SPECIES ACCOUNTS:

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: A “Tule” Greater White-fronted Goose (*subspecies elgasi*) was found at Sitka 22 May 2011 (MRG; Figures 1 and 2). The Tule Goose, the largest subspecies of the Greater White-fronted Goose, has a total population estimated to be less than 10,000 birds, a breeding range restricted to the upper Cook Inlet basin (where they nest in boreal forest habitats), and a winter range largely restricted to the Sacramento Valley and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta of California—the small population and restricted range make this Goose one of the most vulnerable waterfowl populations in North America (information summarized from Ely et al. 2005 and 2006, Densmore et al. 2006). There is one prior Southeast Alaska report of a banded (numbered neck collar) Tule Goose at Juneau 1 September 2003 (MWS) and at least two additional May reports from Juneau of probable Tule Geese, including one that was carrying a satellite transmitter 1 May 2005 (GBV).

Figure 1. “Tule” Greater White-fronted Goose (*subspecies elgasi*; bird on the right) at Sitka 22 May 2011. Note the larger size, darker plumage, and proportionately longer bill of the Tule Goose compared to the other white-fronted geese, which are presumably subspecies *frontalis*, the common migrant form in Southeast Alaska. *Photo by Matt R. Goff*
CACKLING GOOSE: The Cackling Goose is a fairly common spring migrant in Southeast Alaska, with peak movement from late April to mid-May. Cackling Geese were reported in the Juneau area 10 April–20 May 2011, the Gustavus area 22 April–29 May 2011, and the Ketchikan area 21 April–18 May 2011 (m.obs.). Maximum at Gustavus was 70 on 29 April, which established a new local high count (NKD). A nearly continuous procession of Cackling and Greater White-fronted geese overflew the Ketchikan area for two days 28–29 April 2011 (m.obs.). Piston counted 3,500 birds during an 2-hour period 28 April 2011 and 4,500 birds in a half hour period on 29 April 2011; a day in which birds appeared to be passing at this rate most of the day and night.

Not well known in Southeast Alaska, an Aleutian Cackling Goose (subspecies *leucopareia*) at Ketchikan 9–17 April 2011 was a rare find and very early (SCH et al.; Figure 3).

WOOD DUCK: A drake Wood Duck at Ketchikan 19–23 May 2011 (JHL; Figure 4) provided the 10th local record. This species has proven to be a rare, annual visitant in fall, winter, and spring over the past decade.

EURASIAN WIGEON: Eurasian Wigeon were reported at Gustavus 27 March–20 May 2011 (maximum, four on 27 April 2011; NKD, BBP), the Juneau area 15 March–17 May 2011 (maxima: three on 24 March 2011 and 26 April 2011; GBV, PMS), and Haines (two males on 9 May 2011; LHD, NRH). This species is a rare, regular spring migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

HYBRID WATERFOWL: Adult male American Wigeon × Northern Pintail was an interesting find at Petersburg 22 March 2011 (REL; Figure 5). The male Hooded Merganser × goldeneye that wintered a Juneau was last observed on 5 May 2011 (PMS).
Figure 3. Aleutian Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii leucopareia*) with Canada Geese (subspecies *fulva*) at Ketchikan 13 April 2011. Note the thick white collar at the base of the neck (exaggerated in this bird) bordered by a narrow dark ring, and the pale chest. *Photo by Steven C. Heinl*

Figure 4. This drake Wood Duck at Ketchikan 19 May 2011 was the 10th to be found in the Ketchikan area. *Photo by Jim H. Lewis*
CINNAMON TEAL: A drake Cinnamon Teal at Juneau’s Mendenhall Wetlands 15–16 May 2011 provided this season’s only report (MWS, PAR, RJG). This species is a rare spring migrant and summer visitant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL: A drake Eurasian Green-winged Teal at Ketchikan 9 May 2011 provided the 2nd local record (AWP, SCH; Figure 6). The Eurasian subspecies (nominate crecca) is an uncommon to fairly common resident in the Aleutian Islands (Gibson and Byrd 2007) and is a rare, regular migrant and winter visitant along the Pacific Coast south of Alaska (Campbell et al. 1990a, Marshall et al. 2003, Wahl et al. 2005, Hamilton et al. 2007).

CANVASBACK: There were few reports of Canvasback this spring—one at Gustavus 14 May 2011 and two there 20–22 May 2011 (BBP, NKD), and one at Juneau 21 May 2011 (PAR). This species is typically a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

REDHEAD: Single Redheads were reported at Juneau 16 April 2011 (PMS) and near Haines 9 May 2011 (LHD, NRH; photo). This species is a rare spring migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

TUFTED DUCK: A drake Tufted Duck was a nice find amongst 1,000 Surf Scoters and other waterfowl gathered to feed on spawning Eulachon at Mud Bay, near Haines, 9 May 2011 (LHD, NRH; Figure 7). There were only two prior Southeast Alaska records of this Eurasian species; although it is a rare to fairly common spring migrant in the western Aleutians (Gibson and Byrd 2007), it is a rare, irregular winter visitant along the Pacific Coast south of Alaska (Campbell et al. 1990a, Marshall et al. 2003, Wahl et al. 2005, Hamilton et al. 2007).
SURF SCOTER: Large numbers of Surf Scoters were found in the Juneau area, including 30,000 at Eagle Beach 8–9 May 2011 (PMS) and 10,000 at the Sheep Creek delta 9 May 2011 (GBV). This species is a common to abundant migrant at Ketchikan, where a total of 8,100 were observed flying north past the Ketchikan airport during a 4.5 hour period 1 May 2011 (SCH, AWP, WTY).

COMMON GOLDENEYE: Although the Common Goldeneye is a common migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska, a surprising number were observed at an evening goldeneye roost in early spring at Auke Bay, near Juneau, including a maximum of 425 on 4 April 2011 (GBV).

RED-THROATED LOON: A Red-throated Loon nest with two eggs was found on a small muskeg pond near Ketchikan 23 May 2011 (JHL; Figure 8). This species is an uncommon breeder in the Ketchikan area (Heinl and Piston 2009).
Figure 8. Red-throated Loon on its nest near Ketchikan 23 May 2011. *Photo by Jim H. Lewis*

YELLOW-BILLED LOON: A total of nine Yellow-billed Loons in Glacier Bay’s west arm 22 May 2011 was a large count for Southeast Alaska (NKD).

PIED-BILLED GREBE: The Pied-billed Grebe is casual in Southeast Alaska during the spring. One at Sitka 9–29 May 2011, however, was found in the same location where a pair nested in 2010 (MRG, photo), and it will be interesting to see if breeding is documented there again.

WESTERN GREBE: The Western Grebe is a locally common winter visitant in southern Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978); a count of 650 at Clover Pass, a traditional wintering site near Ketchikan, 6 March 2011 was among the largest local counts of this species (WTY, SCH). Western Grebe was also found near Sitka 27 April 2011 (PHN), where this species is rare.

LAYSAN ALBATROSS: Three Laysan Albatross were observed well offshore of Dall and Coronation islands, in southern Southeast Alaska, 10 May 2011 (MT, ST). The Laysan Albatross is uncommon to fairly common in the northern and western Gulf of Alaska (Day 2006), but its status in the eastern Gulf is poorly known.

OSPREY: A total of six Ospreys, tallied as they flew north over Ketchikan on the morning of 1 May 2011 (AWP, SCH, WTY); was a good count of this uncommon migrant.

SORA: Soras were reported in the Juneau area, where they are found annually in small numbers, including singles at the Community Gardens 25 and 29 May 2011 (m. obs.) and the Moose Lake area 30 May 2011 (BBP). The Sora is a rare migrant and local summer visitant and breeder on mainland Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).
BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER: An extremely early Black-bellied Plover at Gustavus 24 March 2011, was followed by eye-opening numbers at the end of April, including a maximum estimate of 800 on 30 April 2011 (NKD). The previous high-count for Gustavus was 500 in May 2010 (BBP). A Black-bellied Plover at the Mendenhall Wetlands, near Juneau, 28 April 2011 (PMS, NRH, GBV), had been banded at Woolley Lagoon, near Nome, in June 2010 (fide Phil Bruner, Brigham Young University-Hawaii). A maximum of 80 at the Mendenhall Wetlands 30 April 2011 was a good count for the Juneau area (PMS), and a total of 60 flying north over Tongass Narrows, Ketchikan, 29 April 2011 provided a new local high count (AWP).

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER: A Pacific Golden-Plover at Sitka 17 April 2011 was early (MRG, photo). Normal small numbers were reported at many localities beginning in late April (Figure 10).

SPOTTED SANDPIPER: A Spotted Sandpiper at Sitka 28 March 2011 (PHN) was unusual. There are few winter records for Southeast Alaska and the first migrants do not typically arrive until early May.

![Figure 9](image.jpg)

Figure 9. Mt. Edgecumbe provided a nice backdrop for this Black Oystercatcher nest at Low Island, Sitka Sound, 29 May 2011. In addition to five oystercatcher nests, Matt Goff also found a nice selection of late migrant shorebirds on 29 May, including Ruddy Turnstones, Red Knots, Sanderlings, and a Semipalmated Sandpiper. *Photo by Matt R. Goff*

WANDERING TATTLER: Wandering Tattler sightings at Juneau included a flock of 23 on 12 May 2011 (PMS, MWS, et al.) and 14 on 15 May 2011 (PAR). These observations established new local high counts for this species, which, although it is a fairly common migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978), is usually found in smaller numbers and not in flocks.
GREATER YELLOWLEGS: A Greater Yellowlegs that wintered at Ketchikan was last noted on 2 March 2011 (DKP), while the first spring arrival there was late on 9 April 2011 (JTH, PSH).

HUDSONIAN GODWIT: The Hudsonian Godwit is a rare, regular spring migrant to northern Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978). Single Hudsonian Godwits were found at Juneau 6 May 2011 (PMS), 16 May 2011 (RJG), and 22 May 2011 (GBV); however, none were found at Gustavus, for the first time since Nat Drumheller began compiling field observations there in 2003. Up to two Hudsonian Godwits at Sitka 4–11 May 2011 (MRG; Figure 11) were unusual on the outer coast, where there are few prior records.

![Image of a Pacific Golden-Plover](https://example.com/pacific-golden-plover.png)

*Figure 10. The Pacific Golden-Plover is an uncommon spring migrant in Southeast Alaska. This plover was photographed at the Mendenhall Wetlands, near Juneau, 28 April 2011. If you look closely you can pick out Gus van Vliet. Photo by Nick R. Hajdukovich*

BAR-TAILED GODWIT: A Bar-tailed Godwit at Ketchikan 18 May 2011 provided the first local report of this species (JHL; JFK, details). This species is a casual migrant in southeast Alaska.

MARBLED GODWIT: Marbled Godwits made a nice showing in Southeast where they are rare spring migrants. Nine at Gustavus 30 April 2011 (new local high count; NKD) were followed by singles on 1 and 5 May 2011 (NKD, BBP). In the Juneau area, one was found at Eagle Beach 13–15 May 2011 and up to six were present at the Mendenhall Wetlands 14–21 May 2011 (m.obs.). At Ketchikan, two were found on 1 May 2011 and four on 6 May 2011 (WTY, AWP, SCH).
Finally, Marbled Godwits were found at Sitka 26 April–17 May 2011; maximum, five on 3 May 2011 (MRG).

Figure 11. Hudsonian Godwit (2nd from left) with Marbled Godwits at Sitka 6 May 2011. Photo by Matt R. Goff

SURFBIRD: Nice high counts of Surfbirds at Juneau included 2,500 at Outer Point 1 May 2011 (PMS) and 3,000 at the Mendenhall Wetlands 5 May 2011 (PMS), followed by 2,000 there on 9 May 2011 (RJG).

RED KNOT: Of interest, a flock of five Red Knots at Gustavus 1 May 2011 (NKD) included one that had been banded in the upper Gulf of California (Delta del Colorado) 10 March 2011 (fide Victor Ayala Perez; Jim A. Johnson, USFWS). This shorebird is a rare to locally uncommon migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

RED PHALAROPE: Two Red Phalaropes at the Mendenhall Wetlands, near Juneau, 16 May 2011 (RJG) and a flock of five in Clarence Strait, near Gravina Island, 17 May 2011 (AWP, SCH) were unusual finds. This highly-pelagic species is casual on inside waters and most records are from the fall.

BLACK-HEADED GULL: A 1st-cycle Black-headed Gull at Eagle Beach, near Juneau, 11 May 2011 (MWS, details) provided only the 3rd Southeast Alaska report (all from Juneau). Although this Eurasian gull is a rare spring migrant in the western Aleutians (Gibson and Byrd 2007), it is casual elsewhere in Alaska and along the Pacific Coast south of Alaska (Hamilton et al. 2007).

RING-BILLED GULL: A 1st-cycle Ring-billed Gull at Juneau 14 May 2011 (RJG) was the season’s only report. This gull is a rare annual visitant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

CALIFORNIA GULL: Two adult California Gulls at Ketchikan 6 March 2011 were very early migrants (WTY, SCH). Maximum numbers at Ketchikan included 150 (nearly all adults) at Clover Pass, near Ketchikan, 12 May 2011 (SCH). Small numbers were found north to the Juneau area where maxima were five on 10 May 2011 (EW) and 15 May 2011 (GBV).
GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL: Some interesting recoveries of banded Glaucous-winged Gulls were made this spring in the Glacier Bay area. One at Gustavus 22 March 2011 (NKD) had been banded as an adult at a nesting colony on South Marble Island, Glacier Bay, in July 1999. Another adult Glaucous-winged Gull at South Marble Island 23 May 2011 (BM) had also been banded as an adult at the South Marble colony in July 1999. Both birds were thus at least 16 years old (band information *fide* Stephani Zador).

CASPIAN TERN: The first Caspian Terns of the spring were found at White Sulphur Hotsprings, Chichagof Island, 23 April 2011 (PBSV) and Eagle Beach, near Juneau, 25 April 2011 (PMS). Small numbers were reported through the end of the period at Ketchikan, Sitka, Gustavus, Juneau, and Haines (m.obs.); maximum was four at Juneau 15 May 2011 (PAR, MWS).

HORNED PUFFIN: A Horned Puffin was unusual on inshore waters at Sitka 27 March 2011 (MRG; Figure 12), though a Horned Puffin was also found near Sitka in February 2011. A Horned Puffin was also observed 36 km southwest of Forrester Island (54 29 07 N, 133 52 32 W), where this species nests, 10 May 2011 (MT, ST). Horned Puffins arrived in Glacier Bay in late May, where they nest in very small numbers (earliest three on 22 May 2011, NKD).

![Horned Puffin near Sitka 27 March 2011. Photo by Matt R. Goff](image)

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Large numbers of Eurasian Collared-doves overwintered in Southeast Alaska and the species was conspicuous and widespread, primarily in the southern half of the region, throughout the spring period. On 26 April 2011, a pair of collared-doves was observed repeatedly carrying nest material into a small (40’) western hemlock in a Ketchikan yard (KMR). On 27 April 2011, the first Alaska collared-dove nest was located in the tree (AWP). On 12 May 2011, however, the nest was no longer attended and had fallen apart. Apparent juveniles were reported beginning 12 May at two locations at Ketchikan (KMR, JFK); perhaps not surprising considering there were observations of nest building and copulation in Southeast Alaska during the winter of 2010–2011.

MOURNING DOVE: A Mourning Dove that overwintered at a feeders in Ketchikan was last observed 3 April 2011 (KMR). This species is an annual, rare fall visitant to Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978), but there were few (if any?) prior mid-winter records in Alaska.

WESTERN SCREECH-OWL: Up to three Western Screech-Owls were found along Basin Road in Juneau, 24 March–23 April 2011 (NRH; ph). One was also found at Ketchikan on 19 May 2011.
This species is considered a widespread, rare resident in Southeast Alaska, although it may be more common than generally realized due its nocturnal nature.

NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL: The Northern Pygmy-Owl is a rare to uncommon resident in Southeast Alaska. One was heard on several occasions at Ward Creek, near Ketchikan, from 23 March 2011 (JHL) to 15 April 2011 (SCH). At Juneau, up to five different birds were located 23 March–12 May 2011 (PMS, GBV, MWS), and as many as four different birds were reported in the Gustavus area on many dates 3 March–8 May 2011 (m.obs.).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL: For the 6th consecutive year, nesting Northern Saw-whet Owls were documented at a nest box fitted with a remote camera at Gustavus (NKD). A territorial male was heard calling 7–18 March, after which time the male was never heard hooting again. On 17 March, Drumheller observed a male deliver food to the female in the nest box. The female was inside the box nightly after 17 March. The first egg was laid on 31 March and five eggs were eventually laid (Figure 13). The first egg hatched on or slightly before 28 April and all five eggs eventually hatched. Five chicks were visible on 22 May, but only four remained by 31 May 2011, all of which fledged in early June (NKD). Another occupied nest box was photographed on Heceta Island, off the west coast of Prince of Wales Island, 3 May 2011 (SS).

VAUX’S SWIFT: The first Vaux’s Swift arrivals were noted at Ketchikan and Gustavus on 21 May 2011 (AWP, NKD).

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD: Rufous Hummingbirds arrived in early April throughout Southeast Alaska, with first arrivals at Ketchikan 2 April 2011 (SH, ME), Wrangell 6 April 2011 (BC), Juneau 6 April 2011 (fide RHA), and Sitka 8 April 2011 (LPP). Although hummingbirds often arrive in
late March, particularly in southern Southeast, arrival timing in 2011 was within the normal range.

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER: A Black-backed Woodpecker was reported at Juneau 24 March 2011 (DB). This interior species is casual along the British Columbia coast (Campbell et al. 1990b) and in Southeast Alaska (Gibson 1986).

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER: Bucking the trend of late arrival timing for migrants this spring, an Olive-sided Flycatcher at the Ketchikan airport 1 May 2011 set a new early arrival date for the Ketchikan area by four days (AWP, SCH, WTY).

Figure 14. This Horned Lark was found at Sitka 17 April 2011, where the species is a rare migrant. 
*Photo by Matt R. Goff*

HORNED LARK: Rare on the outer coast, Horned Larks were observed twice at Sitka: one on 17 April 2011 (MRG; Figure 14) and two on 7 May 2011 (WS).

TREE SWALLOW: The first Tree Swallow arrivals were late at Ketchikan 22 April 2011 (AWP, SCH) and at Juneau 26 April 2011 (NRH).

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW: Although a single Violet-green Swallow at Ketchikan 5–6 April 2011 tied the previous local arrival date (JHL), the species generally arrived very late and was not reported again at Ketchikan until 7 May 2011 (AWP). The first report from Juneau was on 25 April 2011 (NRH, PAR, GBV).

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW: A Northern Rough-winged Swallow was found at Ketchikan 27 May 2011 (AWP). This swallow is a rare migrant and breeder in Southeast Alaska, primarily on the mainland (Kessel and Gibson 1978), and islands near the mainland.

CLIFF SWALLOW: Two Cliff Swallows at Sitka 22 May 2011 (MRG) were a nice find and very rare away from the mainland.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: A Red-breasted Nuthatch at Ketchikan 15 May 2011 provided only the 3rd local spring record (AWP). This species is most regularly observed in the fall on the islands of southern Southeast Alaska. In northern Southeast Alaska, where this species tends to occur more regularly, small numbers were observed at Juneau 4 March–9 May 2011 (PMS), and Gustavus where two were observed at a feeder throughout the period (NKD).
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD: In Southeast Alaska, the Mountain Bluebird occurs primarily on the mainland where it is a locally uncommon spring migrant; e.g., one at the Unuk River 26 March 2011 (LH, ph.) and one–two at Juneau 26 April–8 May 2011 (m.obs.). More unusual were reports away from the mainland, including four at Ketchikan 4 May 2011 (MS, SH, JHL, photo), two near the Ketchikan airport, Gravina Island 6 May 2011 (AWP, SCH; Figure 15), and one at Pelican 10 May 2011 (PB).

AMERICAN PIPIT: Three American Pipits at Ketchikan 18 March 2011 one at the Mendenhall Wetlands, near Juneau, on the same date (NRH) had wintered locally. This species is a casual winter visitant in Southeast Alaska, though winter records have been numerous since 2005 (Heinl and Piston 2009).

SMITH’S LONGSPUR: A male Smith’s Longspur at the Mendenhall Wetlands 16 May 2011 provided only the 5th Southeast Alaska report (RJG).

TENNESSEE WARBLER: As many as three Tennessee Warblers were found in the Juneau area this spring, with the earliest 26 May 2011 (MWS, PAR, GBV; Figure 16). This species is a rare migrant and local breeder on mainland southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

CAPE MAY WARBLER: A singing male Cape May Warbler was a stunner at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 26 May 2011 (GBV, details). The eight Alaska records of this boreal nesting warbler are evenly split between fall and spring, and there was only one prior report for Southeast Alaska at Haines 1 September 1961 (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

TOWNSEND’S WARBLER: Townsend’s Warblers arrived late in Southeast Alaska, with first arrivals not noted until 22 April 2011 at Ketchikan (AWP, SCH), 24 April 2011 at Sitka (MRG), and 27 April 2011 at Juneau (GBV).
WILSON’S WARBLER: A Wilson’s Warbler at Sitka 28 April 2011 (PHN) was early and tied the earliest arrival dates that we know of for Southeast Alaska (28 April 2001, Ketchikan; Heinl and Piston 2009; 28 April 1994, Sitka, MLW, MET).

Figure 16. Tennessee Warbler at Juneau 31 May 2011. *Photo by Mark W. Schwan*

Figure 17. Spotted Towhee at Ketchikan 4 April 2011. *Photo by Jim H. Lewis*
SPOTTED TOWHEE: A Spotted Towhee at Ketchikan from 31 March–4 April 2011 (KMR; Figure 17) provided the first local record and the 11th Alaska record. The bird that overwintered in Juneau, the site of most Alaska records, lingered through 23 March 2011 (PMS). This species breeds as close as southwestern British Columbia, where populations along the coast are considered to be mostly resident (Greenlaw 1996).

![Spotted Towhee](image)

Figure 18. Clay-colored Sparrow at Juneau 25 May 2011. *Photo by Deanna MacPhail*

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: A surprise Clay-colored Sparrow at Juneau 26 May 2011 provided only the 10th Alaska record of this species (DKM; Figure 18), which breeds as close as northeastern B.C. (Campbell et al. 2001).

SAVANNAH SPARROW: A Savannah Sparrow at Juneau 24 March 2011 (GBV) probably overwintered as this species does not typically arrive at Juneau until after the 1st week of April. (At least one Savannah Sparrow had been reported into late January 2011 at Juneau.)

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: Following the strong showing of this species throughout Southeast Alaska in the fall and winter of 2010–2011, single birds lingered at feeding stations to 12 April at Juneau (MCH), 24 April 2011 at Sitka (MRG), and 27 April 2011 at Ketchikan (JHL). This species is a rare migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska.

GOLDEN-CROWNED × WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: Hybrid Golden-crowned × White-crowned sparrows were found at Juneau 25 April 2011 (NRH) and Ketchikan 27 April 2011 (JHL, photos) and early May 2011 (KEM; Figure 19).

WESTERN TANAGER: The Western Tanager is an uncommon probable breeder along the rivers of mainland Southeast Alaska and occurs only rarely as a migrant to islands near the mouths of those rivers (Kessel and Gibson 1978). At least six tanagers were found in the Ketchikan area 20–30 May 2011 (m.obs.), where there was only one prior spring report.
Figure 19. These Golden-crowned × White-crowned sparrows were found at Ketchikan 27 April (left; photo by Jim H. Lewis), Juneau 25 April 2011 (center; photo by Nick R. Hajdukovich), and Ketchikan in early May 2011 (right; photo by Ken Mix). All are remarkably similar and share a pale, but dull bill (too dark for Golden-crowned, too dull for White-crowned), crown pattern that is a mix of both species (but supercilium pale gray, rather than white as in White-crowned), and brownish wash across the breast (like Golden-crowned).

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD: The Red-winged Blackbird is a fairly common local breeder on the southeast Alaska mainland, but it is rare in the Alexander Archipelago (Kessel and Gibson 1978). Red-winged Blackbirds made an excellent showing this spring at Ketchikan, where they are considered rare in the spring—at least nine different birds were found 27 March–27 May 2011 (m.obs.; Figure 20). A single Red-winged was also found at Sitka 29 May 2011 where it is a very rare migrant (MRG).

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD: Single Brown-headed Cowbirds were observed at Ketchikan 20 May 2011 (LWP), 22 May 2011 (JFK), and 28 May 2011 (SCH). This species occurs annually in very small numbers in Southeast Alaska, primarily after mid-May.

Figure 20. Red-winged Blackbirds made an excellent showing this spring at Ketchikan. This male was found in the Mountain Point vagrant trap 15 March 2011. Photo by Jim H. Lewis
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: White-winged Crossbills were only reported in northern Southeast Alaska during the period at Juneau, Gustavus, Skagway, Haines, and sitka (m.obs.). Drumheller noted that juveniles were observed regularly around Gustavus from late April through May. [Red Crossbills were common throughout the region during the period; m.obs.].

COMMON REDPOLL: At Gustavus, Common Redpolls showed up in large numbers in early March and remained common through the month before thinning out by late April (NKD). Fledgling redpolls were observed being fed by adults northwest of Gustavus 20 and 21 May 2011. Drumheller had not observed past evidence of nesting around Gustavus, but notes that they nest in the scrubby habitat in the upper portions of Glacier Bay (see Wik and Streveler 1968). Small numbers of redpolls were also recorded in March and April at Juneau, Skagway, and Haines (latest, one at Juneau 8 May 2011, GBV).

PINE SISKIN: Following their strong winter showing in northern Southeast Alaska, Pine Siskins remained abundant through the period and were common throughout the southern half of the region as well. At Gustavus, Drumheller reported an active nest 12 March–2 April 2011 and another bird building a nest 27 March 2011. Juvenile siskins were common in the Gustavus area from late April through May (NKD).

EURASIAN BULLFINCH: Without a doubt, the most spectacular find of the spring was a female Eurasian Bullfinch at Petersburg 22 March 2011 (TME; Figure 21). The bird was relocated and photographed on 14 April 2011 (TME) and was present to at least mid-May (BHP). The bird probably wintered at Petersburg and, in fact, there had been a report of a bullfinch there earlier in winter (fide BHP). There are more than 25 Alaska reports of this Eurasian species which has been found in the western Aleutians and St. Lawrence Island primarily in spring; reports from farther east, at St. Paul and Nunivak islands and the Alaska mainland, have all come from the fall and winter (Pranty et al. 2008). Amazingly enough, the only prior Southeast record was a male at Petersburg 10–11 March 1962 (Kessel and Gibson 1978).
HOUSE SPARROW: The male House Sparrow first observed at Juneau 10 February 2011 lingered through the end of the period (GBV). At least eight House Sparrows (likely more) overwintered at Ketchikan and nesting activity was observed through April and May (AWP, SCH, ED), though nesting activity was not monitored regularly during the period.

LITERATURE CITED


