SUMMARY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRD OBSERVATIONS:
Fall: August–November 2012

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This report summarizes bird sightings from Southeast Alaska for the autumn season, August–November 2012, 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/nab). Generally we report on sightings of birds that are out of range or out of season or occur regularly in small numbers, noteworthy breeding records, unusually large or small numbers of a particular species, unusual migration dates, etc., and so on, and so forth. Highlights this fall included Alaska’s 1st documented record of the Ash-throated Flycatcher, an Iceland Gull, a Long-eared Owl, a Spotted Towhee, a Clay-colored Sparrow, three Palm Warblers, large numbers of Anna’s Hummingbirds, a region-wide influx of Red-breasted Nuthatches, and a nice showing of Swamp Sparrows.

August and September were cooler and much wetter than average at Juneau, and probably most of northern Southeast, while October and November were colder and drier than average due to strong offshore flow that dominated the weather pattern over Southeast. November marked the 7th consecutive month that monthly temperatures were below average, and it was the 3rd coldest and 2nd driest October on record at Juneau. Although October was similarly dry and cold at Ketchikan (precipitation was 55% below average), at the southern end of the region, temperatures were otherwise about average or slightly above, and total precipitation for the fall was 23% below average (only 46 inches). It was a mild and pleasant fall at Ketchikan.

The cold, wet weather at Juneau this fall drove many people to the brink of insanity. In an effort to avoid another winter of misery and low bird numbers, legendary birder Paul Suchanek left the Juneau area for warmer pastures loaded with hot birds. Paul moved to Tucson, Arizona, this fall and this will be the final report to include his sightings from the Juneau area. Paul turned up countless numbers of interesting birds during his decades in Juneau, and his long time series of detailed observations, 10s of thousands of observations, which are all entered into eBird, forms a significant part of what we know about birds in Southeast Alaska.

We would like to thank the people who sent us observations, shared their photographs, and answered our inquiries about their sightings, all of whom are cited below. We particularly appreciated the extensive reports from Nat Drumheller (Gustavus), Matt Goff (Sitka), and Bonnie Demerjian (Wrangell). We benefited from access to sightings entered into eBird (www.ebird.org) which we’ve incorporated into this report, and we thank Gus van Vliet for reviewing the eBird data from Juneau. Gus van Vliet, Nat Drumheller, David Sonneborn, and Matt Goff provided information and reviews that improved the final draft of this summary. Our past seasonal reports (since fall 2008) have been archived at the Juneau Audubon website (http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org/SE%20AK%20Birding.html).

Names and Initials of observers cited in the text or who reported sightings:  Beverly A. Agler (BAA), Robert H. Armstrong (RHA), Gwen S. Baluss (GSB), Paul Barnes (PB), R. Brad Benter (RBB), Cam Cacioppo (CC), Ryan Carpenter (RC), Kaylauna L. Churchill (KLC), Jess Colthorp (JC), Amy Courtney (AC), Lucas H. DeCicco (LHD), Bonnie H. Demerjian (BHD), Matt Donohoe (MD), Nat K. Drumheller (NKD), Chris Ford (CF), Lon Garrison (LG), Connor P. F. Goff (CPFG), Jonathan R. Goff (JRG), Matt R. Goff (MRG), Nick R. Hajdukovich (NRH), Scott Harris (SH), Steven C. Heinl (SCH), Emma H. Johnson (EJH), Doug Jones (DJ), Jerrold F. Koerner (JFK), Laurie A. Lamm (LAL), Jim H. Lewis (JHL), Richard E. Lowell (REL), Deanna K. MacPhail (DKM), Van D. Madding (VDM), Molly A. McCafferty (MAM), John W. Morse (JWM), Gary Mulligan (GM), Janet Neilson (JN), Paul H. Norwood (PHN),
SPECIES ACCOUNTS:

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: Single Greater White-fronted Geese at Juneau 20 October 2012 (NRH; = new local late date), and at Ketchikan 20–21 October 2012 (AWP, WTY) and 18 November 2012 (JHL, photo), were very late—most migrants pass through Southeast from late August to late September.

SNOW GOOSE: Snow Geese were widely noted migrating over Southeast in late September. An early flock over Wrangell 18 September 2012 (BHD) was followed by a good movement starting in late September (e.g., 100 at Sitka 24 September 2012, MRG; 150 at Ketchikan 29 September 2012, AWP; 50 at Ketchikan 1 October 2012, WTY; and flocks of 40 and 30 at Point Agassiz, on the mainland north of Petersburg, 14 and 16 October 2012, BY).

BRANT: A flock of 24 Brant at Gustavus 24 August 2012 (EHJ) certainly summered in the area, as large numbers were found in the Glacier Bay-Gustavus area earlier in the summer.

CACKLING GOOSE: Small numbers of Cackling Geese were observed in the Gustavus area mid-September–22 November (maximum, 24 on 14 October 2012; NKD) and at Sitka 19 October–28 November 2012 (maximum, 15 on 15 November 2012; MRG; Figure 1). Smaller numbers were reported elsewhere in Southeast (Figure 2).

TUNDRA SWAN: A flock of 37 Tundra Swans at Juneau’s Brotherhood Park 9 September 2012 (BAA, PAR) was a nice find and very early since most Tundra Swans probably migrate over Southeast in October–November. A Tundra Swan at Ketchikan’s Ward Lake 11–14 November 2012 provided only the 4th local record (SCH, WTY).

WOOD DUCK: A female or immature Wood Duck was shot by a hunter at Fish Bay, northern Baranof Island, 28 September 2012 (JC, photo). This species is a rare, annual visitant to Southeast Alaska in fall, winter, and spring.

EURASIAN WIGEON: An immature Eurasian Wigeon at Ketchikan 24 August 2012 was very early (SCH; well-studied, including views of the gray, rather than white, underwing coverts). Although this species is a rare, regular migrant in Southeast, it has not been reported in fall prior to October, likely due to the difficulty of separating American and Eurasian wigeon in other-than adult male plumage. Eurasian Wigeon at Sitka 6–7 October 2012 (one; LPP, MRG) and the Mendenhall Wetlands 17 November 2012 (two; NRH, RBB) were found on more typical dates.

AMERICAN WIGEON: A probable American Wigeon × Northern Pintail hybrid returned to Petersburg harbor for its 3rd consecutive year 29 October 2012+ (REL).

NORTHERN PINTAIL: A count of 400 Northern Pintail at the Mendenhall Wetlands at the peak of migration 22 August 2012 (PMS) was twice the previous high count for that location.
Figure 1. These Cackling Geese at Sitka 22 October 2012 were interesting. The bird in the center is easily identified as subspecies *leucopareia*, the Aleutian Cackling Goose, by its thick white neck collar separated from the breast by a dark border. The two birds on the right are likely subspecies *minima*, as they are slightly smaller, with dark brown chests, and the front bird has contrastingly marked scapularears typical of that subspecies. The bird on the left is problematic; it may be a hatching-year *leucopareia* (which often lack the white neck collar of adults) or subspecies *taverneri*, the status of which is poorly known in southcoastal Alaska—or maybe even a Lesser Canada Goose, subspecies *parvipes*, though it appears to have the small triangular bill of a Cackling Goose, rather than the flatter, longer bill of a Canada Goose. Who knows?

Figure 2. These Cackling Geese at Ketchikan 30 September 2012 (left; photo by Jim H. Lewis) and Juneau 19 October 2012 (right; photo by Mark W. Schwan) exhibited characteristics of subspecies *minima*, including tiny bill, and dark breast with dark-brown (or, what people like to call “purplish” or “brassy”) feather edges.
CANVASBACK: Canvasbacks were located at Sitka (one, 21 October 2012; LPP) and Juneau (several, 22 September–12 November 2012; m.obs.). This duck is a rare fall migrant in southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

RING-NECKED DUCK: A brood of Ring-necked Ducks (five ducklings and a hen) at Moose Lake 18–19 August 2012 (GBV, PMS, PAR, BAA) added to nest records in the Juneau area. Maximum counts were made at the usual locations later in mid-October, including 53 at Juneau’s Twin Lakes 17 October 2012 (NRH) and 20 at Sitka’s Swan Lake 21 October 2012 (MRG).

BARROW’S GOLDFEYE: The Barrow’s Goldeneye is a common migrant and winter visitant throughout Southeast Alaska (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959); however, Hajdukovich’s count of 640 Barrow’s at an evening roost at Auke Lake 1 November 2012 (NRH) was among the largest counts ever for the Juneau area, most of which have occurred during late fall (October–November).

YELLOW-BILLED LOON: A Yellow-billed Loon at Christmas Cove, Kuiu Island, 23 August 2012 (BHD, CLR) likely summered in the area, as migrants do not typically arrive in Southeast until October.

PIED-BILLED GREBE: This fall’s Pied-billed Grebes were found at Sitka (one, 13 September–7 November 2012, MRG, CPFG) and the Juneau area (up to two, 17–27 September 2012 (DKM, MWS, et al.; and one 23–24 October, MWS, NRH). This species is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

WESTERN GREBE: As has been typical over the past several years a few Western Grebes were found in northern Southeast, including one at Sitka 23 September (PHN), two at Gustavus 14 October 2012 (NKD), and one there 22 November 2012 (NKD). This species is locally common on inside waters from Sumner Strait south (Kessel and Gibson 1978), and is a rare, annual visitant in northern Southeast Alaska north of Sumner Strait.

NORTHERN FULMAR: A Northern Fulmar and two dark shearwaters (Short-tailed/Sooty) were observed flying past Mountain Point, Ketchikan, during a storm 4 November 2012 (SCH, LHD, NRH). Northern Fulmars and Sooty Shearwaters occur regularly in fall into lower Clarence Strait, but there was only one prior record of a live fulmar from the Ketchikan roadsystem, and there were no previous reports of shearwaters.

GREAT BLUE HERON: Large congregations of Great Blue Herons were found at Bartlett Cove this fall, including 17 on the Bartlett Cove fuel dock 29 October 2012 (JN), and 14 in that area 25 November 2012 (NKD). This heron is normally encountered in much smaller numbers in Southeast Alaska, though large congregations occasionally appear at roost sites or feeding areas (Heinl and Piston 2009).

SORA: A Sora at Mendenhall Wetlands 22 August 2012 (PMS) provided the only report this fall. This species is a rare migrant, summer visitant, and local breeder in Southeast Alaska, primarily along the mainland river systems (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

AMERICAN COOT: American Coots were reported at Sitka 24 September 2012+ (maximum, three; MRG, CPFG), Petersburg 17 October 2012+ (one, CF, REL et al.; photo), Gustavus 6–7 October 2012 (two, NKD) and 11–15 October 2012 (one, NKD), and Juneau 12 October–15 November (up to five birds; m.obs.). This species is a rare, regular migrant and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska.
GREATER YELLOWLEGS: A Greater Yellowlegs at Sitka 20 October 2012 provided a new local late date (MRG, photo). One at the Mendenhall Wetlands 4 November 2012 (PAR, LAM), however, was extremely late, though there are nearly 10 winter records for Southeast.

UPLAND SANDPIPER: An Upland Sandpiper was found at Juneau 23 August 2012 (MWS). This shorebird is a casual fall migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978) but has been reported annually in the Juneau area over the past seven years. There are very few Southeast reports away from the northern mainland.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT: Two Hudsonian Godwits at the Mendenhall Wetlands 9 August 2012 (PMS) provided the only report. This godwit is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska and most of the Region’s reports come from the Gustavus and Juneau areas.

MARBLED GODWIT: Single Marbled Godwits at Juneau 8–11 October 2012 (DS, NRH, GBV, MWS; Figure 3) and Sitka 22–8 November 2012 (MRG, LPP, RC, LG; Figure 3) were unusual in fall and very late. The Marbled Godwit is a regular, rare migrant in Southeast Alaska but is distinctly casual in the fall, and the Sitka bird provided a new late date for the state—the previous latest date we could find for Alaska was 26 October 2009 (one at Homer; North American Birds 64:134).

RED KNOT: A Red Knot at Gustavus 6 October 2012 was late (NKD). Although this shorebird is a regular spring migrant in Southeast Alaska, it is very rare in the fall.

WESTERN SANDPIPER: A Western Sandpiper at Gustavus 20 October 2012 (NKD, photo) provided a new local late date and was among the latest ever to be found in Southeast Alaska.

LEAST SANDPIPER: The Least Sandpiper is a common migrant in Southeast; however, 350 at the Mendenhall Wetlands 4 August 2012 (PMS) provided one of the largest local counts—second only to an astounding 900 on 5 August 2003 (PMS). A Least Sandpiper at Sitka 22 October 2012 (MRG, photo) provided a new local late date, and there are few (if any?) later dates for Southeast.

![Figure 3](image-url) Very late Marbled Godwits were found at Juneau 10 October 2012 (left; photo by Mark W. Schwan) and Sitka 22 October 2012 (right; photo by Matt R. Goff).

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PECTORAL SANDPIPER: Two Pectoral Sandpipers that lingered at the Mendenhall Wetlands to 6 November 2012 (PAR, GBV, LAL, NRH) were getting late, and there are few local records later than the first week of November.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER: Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were found at the usual locations this fall. An early bird at the Mendenhall Wetlands 30–31 August 2012 (PAR; PMS, MWS) was followed by another there 27–28 October 2012 (PAR, et al.; Figure 4), while singles at Gustavus 9 and 11 October 2012, were followed by two there 20 October 2012 (NKD; Figure 4). This shorebird is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska.

STILT SANDPIPER: Stilt Sandpipers were found at the usual places in northern Southeast, with a maximum of four at the Mendenhall Wetlands 17–23 August 2012 (PAR, BAA, MWS, GBV, PMS), and two at Gustavus 18 August 2012 (BBP; Figure 5). This shorebird is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER: Single Buff-breasted Sandpipers were found in the usual locations in northern Southeast, at the Mendenhall Wetlands 31 August 2012 (PMS, MWS) and Gustavus 15 September 2012 (BBP, NKD; Figure 5). This shorebird is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska.

FRANKLIN’S GULL: A 1st-cycle Franklin’s Gull at Ketchikan 22 August 2012 was joined by a 2nd bird the next day (AWP, SCH). This species is a rare migrant and summer visitant to coastal Alaska.

WESTERN GULL: An adult Western Gull was well-documented at Sitka 23 September 2012 (MRG; Figure 6). Hybrid Western × Glaucous-winged gulls were found at Ketchikan 11 September 2012 and 12 November 2012 (AWP, SCH, WTY). Hybrids occur more frequently in Alaska than pure Western Gulls, particularly in the Ketchikan area (Heinl and Piston 2009).

Figure 4. Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were beautifully photographed at Gustavus 20 October 2012 (left; photo by Nat K. Drumheller) and Juneau 28 October 2012 (right; photo by Mark W. Schwan).
Figure 5. Interesting shorebirds are routinely found in the Gustavus area, including a Buff-breasted Sandpiper 15 September 2012 (left) and two Stilt Sandpipers 18 August 2012 (right). Photos by Bruce B. Paige

Figure 6. Rare gulls at Sitka this fall included a Slaty-backed Gull 22 September 2012 (left) and a Western Gull 23 September 2012 (right). Photos by Matt R. Goff

CALIFORNIA GULL: At the fringe of this species’ regular range in Southeast, small numbers of California Gulls were observed at Sitka 1 August–27 November 2012 (maximum, two on 4 September 2012; MRG, photo), and single birds were observed on five dates in August at Gustavus (BBP, NKD).

ICELAND GULL: An adult Iceland Gull (subspecies kumlieni) was well-documented at Ketchikan 4 November 2012 (LHD, NRH; Figure 7). This gull is casual in Southeast Alaska, where there are probably fewer than 10 documented records.

SLATY-BACKED GULL: An adult Slaty-backed Gull at Sitka 22–26 September 2012 (MRG, LPP; Figure 6) provided the only report for the season. This Asian gull is a rare fall migrant along the south coast of Alaska.
Figure 7. The adult gull at the center of this photo is likely an extremely pale-winged example of the Kumlien’s Gull (*Larus glaucopterus kumlieni*), which has rarely been documented in Alaska. The small size, dark eye, and very slim bill easily separate this bird from an adult Glaucous Gull (which would also show a paler mantle in comparison to the adjacent Thayer’s Gull’s). *Photo by Nick R. Hajdukovich*

CASPION TERN: Caspian Terns were observed in below-average numbers in the Gustavus area this fall, and only one juvenile was observed; maximum was only 12 on 8 August 2012 (BBP). The one juvenile was accompanied by an adult 27–29 September 2012 (NKD). This was one of the latest dates for Alaska—the only later date we could find was 8 October 1988 (Copper River delta; *Am. Birds* 41:153). Maximum counts elsewhere were up to three at Sitka 13–14 August 2012 (MRG), four at Juneau 11–15 August 2012 (m.obs.), and four at Ketchikan 12 August 2012 (AWP).

LONG-TAILED JAEGER: Four Long-tailed Jaegers together at Gustavus 7 August 2012 (BBP) were unusual; this highly-pelagic species is typically found well offshore of Southeast Alaska in fall, and it is very rare on inside waters.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Numbers of collared-doves in Southeast Alaska appeared to be lower than in recent years, but they were still present at most communities from Ketchikan to Gustavus. In the southern half of the region, collared-doves remained widespread at Ketchikan, although flocks were generally reduced from the previous two summer/falls, and few large flocks were reported (maximum, 21 on 12 November 2012; SCH, WTY). A flock of 9–11 doves was present through August at a Wrangell feeder, with a pair remaining through at least 19 November 2012 (BHD). There were casual reports of other small groups around Wrangell during the summer. The number of collared-doves in most communities in northern Southeast has remained comparatively low; e.g., 1–5 birds at Gustavus, Sitka, and Juneau during the period (m.obs.).

SNOWY OWL: Single Snowy Owls were found in the Sitka area 23 October 2012 (GM; Figure 8), 4 November 2012 (at Sitka airport, MD, MRG; photo), and 24 November 2012+ (MRG, et al.). This species is an irregular visitant to Southeast Alaska, primarily in late fall (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959).
NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL: At Gustavus, Northern Pygmy-Owls were reported on many dates between 21 August and 24 November 2012 (NKD, BBP, PB). Single birds were also reported at Juneau 3 October 2012 (GSB), Kruzof Island 9 November 2012 (MRG; Figure 8), near the Stikine River 14 August 2012 (WTS), and at Ketchikan 19 September (SCH) and 27 November 2012 (JFK).

LONG-EARED OWL: A Long-eared Owl at the Mendenhall Wetlands 12 November 2012 (PAR, BAA, GBV, RHA; Figure 9) was only the 11th to be found in Alaska. A Long-eared Owl was found at the same exact same location last November. This owl nests as close as central interior British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1990), but nested in southwestern Yukon in 2005 (fide Cameron D. Eckert).

COMMON NIGHTHAWK: A Common Nighthawk appeared regularly at dawn and dusk at Auke Bay 2–9 September 2012 (GBV, MAM). This species is a rare fall migrant on and near the mouths of the mainland river systems in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

VAUX’S SWIFT: Three Vaux’s Swifts at Klukwan, along the Chilkat River, 15 August 2012 (CPS) were near the northern edge of this species’ breeding range (Johnson et al. 2008).

Figure 8. Sitka birders turned up some nice owls this fall, including a Northern Pygmy-Owl at Kruzof Island 9 November 2012 (left; photo by Matt R. Goff) and a Snowy Owl, that landed in the rigging of a troller offshore in Sitka Sound 23 October 2012 (right; photo by Gary Mulligan).

ANNA’S HUMMINGBIRD: Anna’s Hummingbirds made another tremendous showing in the region, with up to 10 at Ketchikan 3 September 2012+ (AWP, SCH, WTY, JHL; photos), as many as six at Juneau 31 August 2012+ (GBV, PAR, CR, SS; photos), singles at Gustavus 23–30 September 2012 (JL, NKD, JN) and early October 2012 (CC), and one at Klukwan, near Haines, 19 September–7 October 2012 (CPS, photo). One of the Juneau birds was apparently shipped south via Alaska Airlines to Los Angeles (fide Aaron Lang) where it was presumably released into the wild. This isn’t the first time that a hummingbird was shipped south: Alaska’s first Costa’s Hummingbird and numerous Anna’s Hummingbirds were caught in early winter at Anchorage, Cordova, and Juneau, and shipped south to Seattle, while a Ruby-throated Hummingbird captured in Nome (in August) was shipped to Juneau (fide Daniel D. Gibson)!
Figure 9. This stunning Long-eared Owl at the Mendenhall Wetlands provided only the 11th Alaska record, but marked the 3rd November in the last four that this species was found in the Juneau area. *Photo by Robert H. Armstrong*

GYRFALCON: Single Gyrfalcons at the Mendenhall Wetlands 18 October 2012 (NRH) and Gustavus 30 November 2012 (NKD) were great finds. This species is very rare in Southeast Alaska and most reports come from northern Southeast. [ Note: Get used to seeing the falcons listed right between the woodpeckers and the songbirds, rather than in their old position following the hawks. The American Ornithologists’ Union made this taxonomic change last year based on recent genetic analyses that showed Falconiformes (falcons), Psittaciformes (parrots), and Passeriformes (songbirds) form a “monophyletic” group (Chesser et al. 2012). ]

HAMMOND’S FLYCATCHER: A Hammond’s Flycatcher near the airport at Gustavus 13 August 2012 provided one of only a few local records and the first in the fall (BBP). This species is an uncommon migrant and breeder along the major rivers of mainland Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: Alaska’s 1st documented Ash-throated Flycatcher was found in Ketchikan’s Millar Street neighborhood 7 November 2012 (SCH, AWP, WTY; Figure 10). The bird was observed nearly daily through 17 November, during which time it was observed and photographed by at least eight other birders. There is one prior report of the Ash-throated Flycatcher in Alaska (one at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 20 July 1999, GBV; Gibson et al. 2003) but the Ketchikan bird was the first to be conclusively documented by photograph. This species occurs regularly only as close as central and south-central Washington (Cardiff and Dittman 2002) and is very rare north to southwestern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1997).
**Figure 10.** This Ash-throated Flycatcher spent 11 days at Ketchikan 7–17 November 2012 (here photographed 13 November 2012). *Photo by Steven C. Heinl*  

WESTERN KINGBIRD: A Western Kingbird was found at Patterson Bay, east side of Baranof Island, 6 August 2012 (JRG; photo). This species breeds north to the southern interior of British Columbia (Gamble and Bergin 2012) but is a casual summer and fall visitant to Alaska.

WARBLING VIREO: A Warbling Vireo at Ketchikan 2 October 2012 (JHL) was very late. Most Warbling Vireos depart Alaska by mid-September and there are few October records.

AMERICAN CROW: On 18 November 2012, van Vliet observed a lone crow at Auke Bay (near Juneau) that sounded exactly like an American Crow (i.e., much higher pitched calls than Northwestern Crow). The bird perched for a while then flew off, continuing to call its higher-pitched vocals. An hour later, Gus watched the resident flock of 150 Northwestern Crows come into his yard and noted the comparative difference in their calls was significant (i.e., much lower, hoarser calls). The American Crow is known with certainty in Alaska only at Hyder, based on specimens collected there in 1986 and 1987 (Gibson and Kessel 1992; contra Verbeek and Caffrey 2002[!]). It has been found annually at Hyder (up to 70 birds) and nesting has been documented on numerous occasions. East of the Coast Mountains, it breeds north to adjacent north-central interior British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1997) and crows have been found with increasing frequency north to southern Yukon (Alexander et al. 2003). Although the Juneau observation cannot be considered a documented record, we agree with van Vliet that it is of interest in light of the species’ recent status in Yukon and the potential for more observations to occur in the future. Adequately documenting such an observation, however, will be an extreme challenge. The two crows differ only subtly, and some authorities consider them to be conspecific (e.g., A. M. Rea in Phillips 1986).

HORNED LARK: Small numbers of Horned Larks were found this fall, including single birds at Gustavus 20 October and 23 November 2012 (NKD), one at Juneau’s Mount Roberts 26 August 2012 (PAR, PMS, BAA), three at the Mendenhall Wetlands 17 November 2012 (GBV, NRH), and one at Ketchikan 18 November 2012 (AWP, SCH; photo). This species is a rare or uncommon migrant in Southeast Alaska, primarily on the mainland (Heinl and Piston 2009).
CLIFF SWALLOW: Single Cliff Swallows were observed at Juneau’s Mendenhall Wetlands on 2, 9, and 11 August 2012 (PAR, PMS, BAA) and at Hyder on 14 August 2012 (AWP, SCH). This species is a very rare summer visitor and breeder on the Southeast Alaska mainland (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: Red-breasted Nuthatches staged a mini-invasion of Southeast Alaska this fall. After being absent since last February at Gustavus, Red-breasted Nuthatches arrived “in force” on 18 August 2012 and four or five could be found daily around town and in Bartlett Cove through the rest of the period (NKD). At Juneau, nuthatches also returned in mid-August and small numbers (1–5 birds) were observed regularly through the end of the period. Elsewhere in Southeast Alaska (e.g., Sitka, Petersburg, Ketchikan), similar small numbers were present from October through the end of the period (m.obs.).

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD: Two Mountain Bluebirds at Juneau 24 October 2012 provided the only report of the fall (MWS, photo). This species occurs primarily on the mainland in southeast Alaska, where it is a locally uncommon spring migrant and casual to rare fall migrant and winter visitant.

TOWNSEND’S SOLITAIRE: A Townsend’s Solitaire was a nice find at Juneau 24 October 2012 (AC). This species is a rare migrant and probable breeder in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: Bohemian Waxwings arrived at Juneau 17 October 2012 (DJ), at Sitka 27 October 2012 (MRG), and at Wrangell 30 November 2012 (KLC).

CEDAR WAXWING: Cedar Waxwings were widely reported from the northern edge of the species’ range. At Klukwan, along the Chikat River, near Haines, seven were observed on 14 August 2012 and 20 on 21 August 2012 (CPS). Small numbers were also observed in the Gustavus area through 30 August 2012 (maximum, 14, including 4 juveniles, on 30 August 2012; BBP). At Juneau, small numbers (1–6 birds) were observed on numerous occasions through 19 September 2012 (m.obs.). Cedar Waxwings were also observed twice in August at Sitka, including 10 on 12 August 2012 (MRG).

SMITH’S LONGSPUR: A Smith’s Longspur near Gustavus 10 September 2012 provided only the second local report (BBP) and the 6th for Southeast Alaska. This species is found regularly to the north, in the interior of southeastern central Alaska, where it is a rare migrant and breeder (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

MACGILLivrAY’S WARBLER: Single MacGillivray’s Warblers were found near Gustavus 15 August and 16 September 2012, where there was only one or two prior fall records (BBP), and two were found at Juneau 11 September 2012 (GSB). Although this species can be common along the larger mainland rivers in Southeast Alaska it is rare away from those areas.

PALM WARBLER: Single Palm Warblers were found in the Juneau area 22 October 2012 (NRH, photo) and 4–8 November 2012 (GBV, MAM, GSB, m.obs.; Figure 11) and Ketchikan 13 October 2012 (SCH, WTY). This species breeds as close as northeastern B.C. (Campbell et al. 2001) but is casual in Alaska where nearly all records are from the fall (Gibson and Kessel 1992).
Figure 11. Palm Warbler at Juneau 8 November 2012, one of three to be found in Southeast this fall. *Photo by Gwen S. Baluss*

SPOTTED TOWHEE: A Spotted Towhee at Wrangell 6 October 2012 (JWM; details) provided the 13th Alaska report and one of few away from Juneau. (The Juneau area apparently has a special draw for towhees, as eight of Alaska’s prior 12 records are from the Juneau area.) This species breeds as close as southwestern British Columbia, where coastal populations are considered to be mostly resident (Greenlaw 1996).

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW: Similar to fall of 2011, Drumheller’s seed patch near the town dock at Gustavus produced tremendous numbers of American Tree Sparrows from mid-October to late November, with maximum counts in late November, including more than 50 on 29 November 2012 (NKD).

CHIPPING SPARROW: A Chipping Sparrow was found at Ketchikan 14 September 2012 (AWP, SCH) where the species is very rare or casual. Singles were also observed at Juneau 21 September 2012 (hatching-year bird captured at a banding station; GSB) and 2 October 2012 (AC). This species is an uncommon breeder at mainland river systems (Kessel and Gibson 1978) and a rare migrant throughout Southeast.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: A Clay-colored Sparrow at Ketchikan 21 October–21 November 2012 (JFK, AWP et al.; Figure 12), provided only the 11th Alaska record of this species, which breeds as close as northeastern B.C. (Campbell et al. 2001).

FOX SPARROW: Single “Red” Fox Sparrows at Juneau 27–28 August 2012 (PMS, photo) and Gustavus 31 August–3 September 2012 (NKD) were early, while singles at Juneau 3 October and 22 October 2012 (NRH, photo) were found on more typical dates. This Taiga breeder is a rare, annual fall and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska but is found more frequently (and earlier) in northern Southeast.
Figure 12. It was a great fall for interesting sparrows in Southeast Alaska, highlighted by this Clay-colored Sparrow at Ketchikan 21 October 2012. *Photo by Jim H. Lewis*

SWAMP SPARROW: Swamp Sparrows turned up in above average numbers again this fall, comparable to the very strong showing in 2010, and at least 10 different birds were found in Southeast: one at Juneau 8–28 November 2012 (NRH, photo), two at Sitka 14–16 November 2012 (RBB, MRG; Figure 13), two at Katlian Bay, near Sitka, 10–12 November 2012 (NRH, photo), and at least five at Ketchikan 3 November 2012+ (AWP, SCH, WTY; photos).

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: This species made a good showing at Ketchikan, where at least seven different birds were found 5 October+ (m.obs.). Single birds at Juneau 23 October 2012 (NRH) and 20–24 November 2012 (VDM, GBV) and Sitka 23 October–18 November 2012 (MRG, GSB) were the only reports away from Ketchikan. The Sitka bird was banded on 18 November 2012 (GSB, SH; Figure 13). This species is a rare migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska.

HARRIS’S SPARROW: Three Harris’s Sparrows were found in Southeast Alaska this fall—single adults at Juneau 5 October 2012 (NRH; Figure 14) and Ketchikan 3–7 November 2012 (JFK, et al.; Figure 14), and an immature at Klukwan, near Haines, 21 November 2012+ (CPS, photo). This species is a very rare or casual migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: For the 2nd fall in a row, Puget Sound White-crowned Sparrows (subspecies *pugetensis*) were again noted at Ketchikan feeders, where at least three adults were found 20 October–18 November 2012 (SCH, AWP, JHL; Figure 15). This subspecies was documented breeding at Ketchikan during the summer of 2012 (see summer report for more details). The published range of the Puget Sound White-crowned Sparrow extends along the Pacific coast from northwestern California north to southwestern British Columbia (Chilton et al. 1995), more than 400 miles south of Ketchikan.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD: A total of 46 Red-winged Blackbirds were tallied as they flew out of Juneau’s Pioneer Marsh 1 August (GBV). This tiny marsh has accounted for some of the largest counts of Red-winged Blackbirds in the region. Two Red-winged Blackbirds at Sitka 19 October 2012 (LPP) and a single bird 16 November 2012 (MRG, photo) were rare local finds, and the latter provided a new local late date. This species is a fairly common breeder on the mainland (Kessel and Gibson 1978) and a rare to uncommon migrant elsewhere in Southeast.
Figure 13. At least 10 White-throated Sparrows and 10 Swamp Sparrows were found in Southeast this fall, including a White-throated banded at Sitka 18 November 2012 (left; photo by Scott Harris, Sitka Conservation Society) and a Swamp Sparrow near Sitka 16 November 2012 (right; photo by Matt R. Goff).

Figure 14. Three Harris’s Sparrows were found in Southeast this fall, including these adults at Juneau 5 October 2012 (left) and at Jerry Koerner’s Ketchikan feeders 3 November 2012 (right). Over the years, Jerry Koerner has tallied 13 species of sparrows in his Ketchikan yard—15 species if you include Dark-eyed Junco and Rustic Bunting! Photos by Nick Hajdukovich

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD: Single Brown-headed Cowbirds were observed at Glacier Bay 9 August 2012 (landed on a cruise ship in the bay; NKD); at Gustavus 11, 17, and 18 August 2012 (all at different locations; NKD, BBP); and at Wrangell 26 August 2012 (KLC; Figure 16). This species is a rare migrant and probable breeder in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

PURPLE FINCH: Two different female/immature Purple Finches at Koerner’s Ketchikan feeding station 5–29 October 2012 provided the only reports of the fall. This species is a very rare, but annual, fall migrant and winter visitant at Ketchikan (Heinl and Piston 2009).
Figure 15. Three different adult Puget Sound White-crowned Sparrows (subspecies *pugetensis*) were found at Ketchikan feeders this fall—singles on 20 October 2012 (left; *photo by Steven C. Heinl*), 21 October 2012 (center; *photo by Jim H. Lewis*), and 29 October 2012 (right; *photo by Steven C. Heinl*). All birds exhibited the yellow bill and duller, tan-and-black striped back of this subspecies vs. the orange bill and brighter, gray-and-reddish streaked back of the regularly occurring Gambel’s White-crowned Sparrow (subspecies *gambelii*).

Figure 16. Like nearly all Brown-headed Cowbirds found in Southeast Alaska in autumn, this bird at Wrangell 26 August 2012 was a juvenile. *Photo by Kaylauna L. Churchill*

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: White-winged Crossbills started increasing in numbers in northern Southeast Alaska in August and were reported to be common and widespread at Gustavus in November (NKD, BBP). This species was relatively common at Juneau throughout the season with numerous reports of flocks of 5–45 birds (m.obs.). Elsewhere in Southeast, a few flocks were reported, including up to 40 birds at Sitka 22 October 2012 and 17 November 2012 (MRG), two birds near the Stikine River 14 August 2012 (WTS), a flock of 20 at Wrangell 10 September 2012 (BHD), and a flock of 15 at Ketchikan 29 October 2012 (AWP, SCH, WTY).
COMMON REDPOLL: Small numbers of Common Redpolls began arriving in northern Southeast Alaska in October and they were seen regularly in small flocks through November at Gustavus (NKD) and Juneau (m. obs.).

PINE SISKIN: At Gustavus, small numbers of Pine Siskins were seen regularly from August through October and their numbers dwindled during November (NKD). Elsewhere, this species was regularly observed throughout the season, with a notable increase late in the season in the southern half of the region. At Ketchikan, siskins were abundant by mid-November when flocks of up to several hundred birds were frequently encountered (AWP, SCH, WTY).

EVENING GROSBEAK: A pair of Evening Grosbeaks attended a feeder at Wrangell 12 October 2012 (KLC). This species is casual in Southeast Alaska, where there are records for all seasons, but it is considered a rare to uncommon migrant and casual winter visitant on the adjacent northern coast of British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

**Bonus Photo.** House Sparrows got busy at Ketchikan this summer—shown here is just part of a flock of 20 adults and immatures 14 September 2012. *Photo by Jim H. Lewis*
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