SUMMARY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRD OBSERVATIONS:
Fall: August–November 2016
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This report summarizes bird sightings from Southeast Alaska for the fall season, August–November 2016, 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.abanab.org]—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.

Fall migration seemed slow along several fronts. Juneau and Ketchikan observers reported lower than average numbers of waterbirds, particularly loons, Red-necked Grebes, some waterfowl, and murres (only one Common Murre was reported at Juneau the entire season). Shorebird migration was about average, but there were only three reports of Black-bellied Plover (!), only one Ruddy Turnstone was reported (!), and no Whimbrels or godwits were reported. Generally low numbers of crossbills and siskins have persisted for over a year. On the other hand, fall is always the best season for finding lost and unusual birds and this season was no exception. Highlights included the 1st documented Alaska records of the Lewis’s Woodpecker and Calliope Hummingbird, the 5th Alaska record of the Tropical Kingbird, and the 3rd Southeast Alaska records of the Brown Booby and Cape May Warbler.

I would like to thank the people who shared observations and photographs and answered inquiries about their sightings, all of whom are cited below. I particularly appreciated reports from Matt Goff (Sitka), Bonnie Demerjian (Wrangell), and Elaine Furbish (Skagway). This report also benefited from access to sightings entered into eBird (www.ebird.org)—more than 80% of the sightings included here were entered in eBird. I would like to thank Gus van Vliet for reviewing the eBird data from Juneau, and Gus, Nat Drumheller, and Matt Goff provided information and reviews that improved the final draft of this summary. Past seasonal reports (since fall 2008) have been archived at the Juneau Audubon website (http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org/SE%20AK%20Birding.html).

Southeast Alaska: “Southeast Alaska” as a biogeographic region was defined by Kessel and Gibson (1978) as all of Alaska east of Cape Fairweather and south to Dixon Entrance.

Checklist of Alaska Birds: A list of all the species of birds known in Alaska (currently up to 514 species, plus an additional 22 unsubstantiated species) is compiled and maintained by the Alaska Checklist Committee and is available free online at:

Names and Initials of observers cited in the text or who reported sightings: Debbie Ackerman (DA), Beverly A. Agler (BAA), Connor Alix (CA), Gwen S. Baluss (GSB), Lynn E. Barber (LEB), Heather Bauscher (HB), R. Brad Benter (RBB), Karen Cornelius (KC), Amy C. Courtney (ACC), Bonnie H. Demerjian (BHD), Tasha Dimarzio (TD), Janene Driscoll (JD), Nat K. Drumheller (NKD), Susan Wise Eagle (SWE), Cameron D. Eckert (CDE), Lisa Etherington (LE), Muhammad Faizan (MF), C. Elaine Furbish (CEF), Connor P. F. Goff (CPFG), Matt R. Goff (MRG), Steven C. Heinl (SCH), Mike Henwood (MH), Julie Howell (JH), Brad L. Hunter (BLH), Stephanie Jurries (SJ), Laura Kaltenstein (LK), Jerrold F. Koerner (JFK), Dave Lesh (DL), James D. Levison (JDL), Jim H. Lewis (JHL), Richard E. Lowell (REL), Karl Martensen (KM), Mary McCafferty (MM), John McDermott (JMc), Bill Messmer (BM), Amy Millsaps (AM), Cody Millsaps (CM), C. L. Millsaps (CLM), J. A. Millsaps (JAM), J Millsaps (JM), Janet Neilson (JN), Paul H. Norwood (PHN), Nicholas Orr (NO), Bruce B. Paige (BBP), Eric V. Parker (EVP), Andrew W. Piston (AWP), Pam T. H. Randles (PTHR), Sunny Rice (SR), Joann Rieselbach (JR), Patty A. Rose (PAR), Jim F. Saracco (JFS), Jeffrey F. Sauer (JFSA), L. R. Slim Schonert (LRSS), Jannik Schou (JS), Joyce Skafestad (JSDK), Mark W. Schwan (MWS), Owen Squires (OS), Marsha Squires (MS), Chuck P. Susie (CPS), Rick Taylor (RT), Ray Tsang (RTS), Gus B. van Vliet (GBV), Gene White (GW), E. L. “Butch” Young (ELY).
SPECIES ACCOUNTS:

**SPECIAL NOTE:** The phylogenetic sequence of the orders, families, genera, and species of birds was changed substantially by the American Ornithologists’ Union in their most recent supplement to the *Check-list of North American Birds* (Chesser et al. 2016). Those changes were adopted in the latest Checklist of Alaska Birds, which is compiled and maintained by the Alaska Checklist Committee (available free online at [http://www.universityofalaskamuseumbirds.org/products/checklist.pdf](http://www.universityofalaskamuseumbirds.org/products/checklist.pdf)), and are also reflected in this report.

SNOW GOOSE: Large numbers of Snow Geese were observed flying south over the Ketchikan area 17–22 October 2016, including small flocks over the course of the day on 18 October that totaled 1,250 birds (AWP), one of the largest local counts ever. Part of the same movement were a flock of 50 flying over the Juneau area 16 October 2016 (MM), where the species is “hit or miss” in the fall (*fide* GBV), a flock of 52 flying south over the Hoonah area 17 October 2016 (ACC), and flocks of 325 and 250 in the Sitka area 17 October 2016 (MRG). One on the ground at Gustavus 18 November 2016 provided a new local late date by 18 days (NKD); most depart the region by late October.

BRANT: Rare in fall, late Brant were observed at Gustavus 22 October, 18 November, and 24 November 2016 (NKD). Most of Alaska’s breeding population flies directly from the Alaska Peninsula to wintering areas via a transoceanic flight that largely bypasses Southeast Alaska (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959, Dau 1992).

CACKLING GOOSE: Among the few Cackling Geese reported this fall, was an Aleutian Cackling Goose (subspecies *leucopareia*) at Sitka 10 November 2016+ (CA, MRG; Figure 1). The Cackling Goose is an uncommon fall migrant in Southeast Alaska—like the Brant, most *minima* and *leucopareia* Cackling Geese fly directly from the eastern Aleutians or Alaska Peninsula to wintering areas via transoceanic flights that largely bypass Southeast Alaska (Woolington 1980, Gill et al. 1996).

![Cackling Goose at Sitka 11 November 2016](http://www.sitkanature.org)

*Figure 1.*–This Cackling Goose at Sitka 11 November 2016 is identified as subspecies *leucopareia*, the Aleutian Cackling Goose, by the thick white collar at the base of the neck bordered below by a narrow dark ring and paler chest. *Photo by Matt R. Goff*
CANADA GOOSE: Lesser Canada Goose reports included a flock of 23 at Eagle Beach, near Juneau, 7–8 September 2016 (GBV), four of which lingered to 16 September (ACC, GBV), another flock of 23 at Auke Lake 30 October 2016 (GBV), and one at Ketchikan 22 October 2016 (SCH). The Lesser Canada Goose (subspecies *parvipes*) is a rare or uncommon migrant in Southeast Alaska.

WOOD DUCK: The drake Wood Duck found at Sitka February 2016 was present through the entire fall season (MRG, m.obs.; Figure 2). This duck is a rare, annual visitant to Southeast Alaska.

![Image of duck](image1.png)

Figure 2.—Nice waterfowl finds this fall included the Wood Duck that’s been present most of a year at Sitka (top; here 6 October 2016; *photo by Matt R. Goff*), a Canvasback at Sitka (bottom left; 13 October 2016; *photo by Chuck P. Susie*), and a Ruddy Duck at Bartlett Lake, near Gustavus (bottom right; 13 November 2016; *photo by Nat K. Drumheller*).

EURASIAN WIGEON: Eurasian Wigeon were reported at Gustavus 22 October 2016 (three; NKD) and Sitka 19 October 2016 (male; CPFG).

CANVASBACK: Canvasbacks were found at three locations this fall: one at Sitka 6–22 October 2016 (MRG, m.obs.; Figure 2), one at the Stikine River delta 6 November 2016 (REL), and up to six at Gustavus 9–14 November 2016 (NKD). This species is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

REDHEAD: A Redhead at Juneau’s Twin Lakes 10–12 October 2016 (PAR, ACC) provided the season’s only report. This species is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

RING-NECKED DUCK: An estimated 120 Ring-necked Ducks at Bartlett Lake, near Gustavus, 21 October 2016 (NKD) was among the highest counts ever for Southeast Alaska.
LESSER SCAUP: A count of 93 Lesser Scaup at Juneau (Temsco Pond) 30 October 2016 (GBV) provided the second largest local count ever.

RUDDY DUCK: A Ruddy Duck at Bartlett Lake, near Gustavus, 21 October 2016 was still present 13 November 2016 (NKD; Figure 2)—the 2nd consecutive year at that location. This species is a casual migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978); there are now more than 20 reports, most of which are from late fall.

Figure 3.–Four of seven White-tailed Ptarmigan at Upper Blackerby Ridge, near Juneau, 11 September 2016. This species is a resident of mainland northern Southeast Alaska south to at least the Juneau area (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959). It probably also inhabits suitable (but difficult to access) high alpine habitat elsewhere along the Southeast Alaska mainland, given its occurrence in the adjacent mountains of British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1990; and also recent reports right across the border near Hyder). *Photo by Gwen S. Baluss*

PIED-BILLED GREBE: At least nine Pied-billed Grebes were reported this fall: one at Virginia Lake, on the mainland near Wrangell, 16 September 2016 (SWE); up to two at Sitka 22 October–20 November 2016 (LEB, MRG, CA; m.obs.); three in the Juneau area 24 October–1 November (PAR, BAA, GBV, GSB, MWS, CDE); one at Bartlett Lake, near Gustavus, 13 November 2016 (NKD); and two at Pat’s Lake, Wrangell, 16 November 2016 (BHD). This species is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

WESTERN GREBE: On 2 November 2016, an estimated 1500 to 2000 Western Grebes were observed in a line that stretched for about a mile in the eastern entrance to Chichagof Pass, approximately 7 miles southwest of Wrangell (REL). This species is locally common in southern Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978)—protected channels in the vicinity of eastern Sumner Strait and Wrangell have produced some of the largest counts in the state, though this observation certainly provided a new high count. Single Western Grebes at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 3–27 November 2016 (GBV, PAR, GSB) and Bartlett Cove 11 November 2016 (NKD) were rare in northern Southeast.
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Eurasian Collared-Doves are present in just about every community in Southeast, though numbers have fluctuated widely from year to year at individual sites and can be difficult to quantify at larger communities. An estimated 80 collared-doves at Klawock 26 October 2016 (RBB) set a new local high count. Maximum counts elsewhere were fairly typical and included up to 30 at Ketchikan (m.obs.), at least 20 at Juneau (m.obs.), at least 40 at Sitka (fide MRG), a flock of 18 at Petersburg on 14 November 2016 (JDL), 12 at Craig on 26 October 2016 (RBB), three at Hyder on 18 August 2016 (SCH), at least two at Gustavus October–November 2016 (NKD), and two at Hoonah on 6 September 2016 (ACC).

Of interest were juvenile birds that accompanied adults at Skagway suggesting local nesting—a juvenile with two adults in early August 2016 (DA), a juvenile with three adults 3 October 2016 (RTs; Figure 4), and a juvenile with three adults in early November 2016 (DA).

![Figure 4. Juvenile Eurasian Collared-Dove at Skagway 3 October 2016. Note the lack of black neck collar, dark eyes, and dull pinkish (rather than reddish) feet. Photos by Ray Tsang](image)

MOURNING DOVE: A Mourning Dove at Gustavus 2 October 2016 (LE, JFS, NKD) represented the only report of the season—a poor showing for this annual, rare fall visitant (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

COMMON NIGHTHAWK: A Common Nighthawk at the Mendenhall Wetlands 27 August 2016 (GBV) was a nice find. This species is a rare fall migrant in Southeast (Kessel and Gibson 1978). Typically only one or two are reported, primarily in late August–early September.

ANNA’S HUMMINGBIRD: Anna’s Hummingbirds were again widely reported this fall, and small numbers were probably present at most towns in Southeast Alaska. Totals at the larger communities can be difficult to quantify, because hummingbird feeders are ubiquitous and many or most hummingbirds go unreported by the non-birding public.

Several lingered from summer into the fall at Ketchikan, Juneau, and Sitka. A minimum of 10 were reported during the fall at Juneau and Sitka, and at least 13 at Ketchikan—totals at these locations, however, certainly represent minimum numbers. More were present this fall than ever before at Gustavus, where the first reports were singles 26 and 27 August (JH, JD), followed by two at the Gustavus Inn in early September (DL; BBP) and up to six in late September–October (it was difficult to keep track of total numbers; NKD). Two remained at Gustavus through November (NKD). At Wrangell, singles were reported 23 October 2016 (WSE) and 26–27 October 2016 (BHD), and two visited a feeder through November 2016 (GW). Other reports included two at Haines 20 October 2016 (PTH), one at Petersburg 30 November 2016 (ELY), and one at Hoonah 1 October 2016+, which provided the 1st documented record for that location (JSk, ACC, photo).
CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD: Among the highlights this fall was Alaska’s 1st documented record of the Calliope Hummingbird, an immature bird skillfully identified at an Auke Bay feeder 3–5 September 2016 (GBV; PAR; Figure 5). Nearly 100 years ago, Willett (1921) reported that F. H. Gray regarded the species to be “quite common at Wrangell in spring and fall during some years; other years apparently absent.” There are at least six unsubstantiated reports since 1967, all in Southeast Alaska, including four at Juneau. It breeds as close as central interior British Columbia (Calder and Calder 1994).

AMERICAN COOT: American Coot reports included one at the Mendenhall Forelands 30 October–5 November 2016 (m.obs.), two at Sitka 18–30 November 2016+ (MRG), and one at Icy Strait 27 September 2016 (JN). Four at Bartlett Lake 21 October 2016 was the high count, and three were still there 13 November 2016 (NKD).

Figure 5.–This immature Calliope Hummingbird at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 3–5 September 2016 established the 1st substantiated Alaska record, photographed here on 4 September (left; photo by Gus B. van Vliet) and 5 September (right; photo by Patty A. Rose). Characteristics that separate this species from the very similar Rufous Hummingbird included its proportionately short tail, which imparts a stubby-ended look (the wing tips extend to just past the tip of the tail); the thin white line above the lores, which extends from the eye to the bill (the lores are dark in the Rufous Hummingbird); and the pale buffy coloration on the flanks, which are, of course, deep rufous on the Rufous Hummingbird.

BLACK OYSTERCATCHER: A high count of 58 Black Oystercatchers at Portland Island, near Juneau, 10 September 2016 (OS, MS) added to even larger counts made there during the summer.

KILLDEER: Nice high counts of Killdeer included 21 at the Mendenhall Wetlands 20 November 2016 (GBV) and 17 at Ketchikan 20 November 2016 (SCH).

RED KNOT: A Red Knot was found at Gustavus 12 September 2016 (BBP). Although this shorebird is a regular spring migrant in Southeast Alaska, it is very rare in the fall.

RUFF: Bucking the trend of a poor shorebird year was a well-documented Ruff at the Mendenhall Wetlands 21 August 2016 (MWS; Figure 6). There are now about 10 Southeast Alaska records of this Eurasian shorebird.
SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER: A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Gustavus 27 September 2016 and two there 22 October 2016 (NKD) provided the only reports of this rare fall migrant.

STILT SANDPIPER: Two Stilt Sandpipers at Gustavus 5 August 2016 and one there 26 August 2016 (BBP) provided the only reports.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER: Single Buff-breasted Sandpipers were found at Gustavus 20 August 2016 and 31 August 2016 (BBP). This species is a casual fall migrant in Southeast Alaska.

Figure 6—A Ruff was beautifully documented at the Mendenhall Wetlands 21 August 2016. *Photo by Mark W. Schwan*

RED PHALAROPE: A flock of 20 Red Phalaropes in East Behm Canal, near Winstanley Island, 23 October 2016 (SJ, photo) was followed by large numbers at Ketchikan 6–14 November 2016, where they fed in tide rips with Mew Gulls; maximum counts were 105 on 6 November and 310 on 11 November (SCH, AWP, JHL, photos). This shorebird is highly pelagic and normally occurs well offshore during migration—it had been found in only five previous falls at Ketchikan and mostly in single digit numbers (maximum was 25 on 21 October 2003).

CASSIN’S AUKLET: Cassin’s Auklets were reported in larger than average numbers in mid-September in the Icy Strait area, where this species is rare or uncommon and sightings are typically in the single digits. Maximum was 20 observed in lower Glacier Bay 19 September 2016 (Janet Neilson) and 20 observed in western Icy Strait 20 September 2016 (Hank Lentfer).

SABINE’S GULL: Coinciding with the November influx of Red Phalaropes in the Ketchikan area were single 1st-cycle Sabine’s Gulls on the late dates of 8, 9, 11, and 12 November 2016, likely representing multiple birds (SCH, AWP, JHL; photos). Another late bird was reported at Sitka 11 November 2016 (HB). More remarkable, however, were singles at the Chilkat River, near Haines, 20 November 2016 (JS, photo) and 23 November 2016 (MF; Figure 7). The latter likely set a new late date for the state, as the latest date that I know of is 20 November 1994 (*Field Notes* 49:86). This pelagic species occurs primarily well offshore of Southeast Alaska and is rare on inside waters.

BONAPARTE’S GULL: Flocks of Bonaparte’s Gulls totaling a minimum of 5,000 birds were observed flying south down Stephens Passage, west of Douglas Island, 13 November 2016 (GBV)—an impressive number for so late in the year in northern Southeast.
RING-BILLED GULL: Normal small numbers of Ring-billed Gulls were present 1 August–18 September 2016 in the Ketchikan area, where the maximum one-day count was seven on 14 August 2016 (all juveniles; SCH). Another 1st-cycle bird at Ketchikan 11 November 2016 was late (SCH). Other reports included a juvenile at Hyder 1 August 2016 (SCH, AWP), an adult at Gustavus 2 September 2016 (BBP), and a late adult at the Mendenhall Wetlands 12–13 November 2016 (CPS, photo; BAA, PAR, JFSa).

Figure 7.–This juvenile Sabine’s Gull at Haines 23 November 2016 likely established a new late date for Alaska. Photo by Muhammad Faizan

CALIFORNIA GULL: A California Gull at Juneau 13 November 2016 (GBV) was getting late for northern Southeast.

CASPIAN TERN: This year was probably the poorest for Caspian Terns in Southeast Alaska in a long time. Four at Juneau 15 August 2016 (RT) represented the only local report all season, and three near Sitka 12 August 2016 (MH, MRG) represented the only other report away from the Gustavus area. Maximum at Gustavus was a low 22 birds on 15 August 2016 (BBP), one of only two counts there in double-digits—perhaps not surprising since nesting attempts at two Glacier Bay sites failed in May–June. Only a single juvenile was reported at Gustavus the entire fall, one begging from an adult on 20 September 2016 (NKD), which was also the last date birds were recorded.

SHORT-TAILED ALBATROSS: A young Short-tailed Albatross was observed well offshore of central Baranof Island 3 September 2016 (PHN; Figure 8). This albatross is likely a regular visitant to the eastern Gulf of Alaska—Kenyon et al. (2009) considered it to be an uncommon, regular summer visitant to adjacent British Columbia waters.

BULLER’S SHEARWATER: One Buller’s Shearwater was observed well offshore of Coronation Island 4 September 2016 (PHN; Figure 8). This species is a regular summer visitant to the Gulf of Alaska.

PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATER: A Pink-footed Shearwater was observed well offshore and southwest of Cape Ommanney 4 September 2016 (PHN; Figure 8). This species is a rare or uncommon summer visitant to the Gulf of Alaska.
BROWN BOOBY: Amazingly, another Brown Booby was observed in Southeast Alaska, this one off the coast of Kruzof Island 6 August 2016 (KM; Figure 9). At least six Brown Boobies have been recorded in Alaska waters since 2014: two in the Aleutians, one in south-central Alaska, and three in Southeast Alaska. These individuals were at the northern extreme of unprecedented summer/fall movements of this species along the eastern Pacific coast, the result of unusually warm ocean water during the past three years.

Figure 8.—An early September cruise off the west coast produced an immature Short-tailed Albatross off Baranof Island 3 September 2016 (left), a Pink-footed Shearwater off Cape Ommaney 4 September 2016 (center), and a Buller’s Shearwater off Coronation Island 4 September 2016 (right). Photos by Paul H. Norwood

Figure 9.—Southeast Alaska’s 3rd Brown Booby was photographed as it rested on a fishing vessel off Kruzof Island 6 August 2016. Photo by Karl Martinsen

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: Rare on inside waters in northern Southeast was a Double-crested Cormorant at Juneau 6 October 2016 (ACC).

GREAT BLUE HERON: A roosting flock of 28 Great Blue Herons at the Bartlett Cove fuel dock 21 November 2016 (NKD) eclipsed the previous local high count by one bird. This heron is normally encountered in much smaller numbers in Southeast Alaska, though large congregations occasionally appear at roost sites or excellent feeding areas (Heinl and Piston 2009).
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK: A Rough-legged Hawk at Ketchikan 1 October 2016 (SCH) provided only the 3rd local record. This species is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska and is primarily found along the mainland where suitable habitat is more prevalent.

NORTHERN HAWK OWL: Two Northern Hawk Owls were reported this fall—a very early bird near Juneau 21 August 2016 (TD) and another at Stink Creek, northern Admiralty Island, 2 October 2016 (NO, photo: fide GBV). This owl is very rare in Southeast Alaska, and most reports are from mainland northern Southeast.

LEWIS’S WOODPECKER: One of the most exciting finds of the fall was Alaska’s first Lewis’s Woodpecker at Petersburg 10–30 November 2016 (SR, BLH, KC; m.obs.; Figure 10). The bird spent some of its time flycatching from tree tops, and it ate apples from a tree that still had some fruit—when the fruit ran out, the bird readily ate store-bought apples that were stuck onto the same tree. Although it was not actually seen on 30 November, apples that had been put out for it in the morning had been eaten by the end of the day. Unfortunately, its carcass was recovered by Britta Lyons on 17 December 2016; Brad Hunter sent it to the University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks, where it was determined the bird died from an injury (fide Jack Withrow).

The Lewis’s Woodpecker breeds regularly north to southern interior British Columbia, and it has roamed as far north as Hazelton and Takla Lake (Campbell et al. 1990), due east of southern Southeast Alaska. In the early 1900s it was also an “abundant” nesting species in coastal southwestern British Columbia but declined after 1940 due to loss of habitat—three extralimital records from that period at Masset, Haida Gwaii (23 October 1936, 22 October 1938, and 29 November 1949) correspond well to the timing of the 2016 Petersburg bird.

AMERICAN KESTREL: An American Kestrel at Skagway 18 August 2016 (JMc) was early; migrants typically begin appearing in northern Southeast in late August.

GYRFALCON: A Gyrfalcon was well-described at the Mendenhall Wetlands 18 September 2016 (MWS). This falcon is very rare in Southeast Alaska, and most reports are from the northern mainland.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD: A Tropical Kingbird at Sitka 19–29 October 2016 (MRG, vocal recording; m.obs.; Figure 11) was the 5 th to be found in Alaska and the first since 2002. Small numbers of hatching-year Tropical Kingbirds regularly disperse north along the Pacific Coast of North America during the fall (Stouffer and Chesser 1998)—the previous Alaska records were all found at Ketchikan during October–November (Heinl and Piston 2009).

WARBLING VIREO: A Warbling Vireo at Ketchikan 1 October 2016 (SCH, photo) was late.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE: A Black-billed Magpie at Juneau 2 September 2016 (GBV) tied the early local arrival date for this species, which typically arrives about a week later. One at Gustavus 5 September 2015 (BBP) was also slightly early. Singles were noted at Wrangell 5 November 2016 (BM) and Petersburg 9 November 2016 (ELY) where rare.

AMERICAN CROW: For the 2 nd consecutive year, Gus van Vliet recorded the calls of what sounded very much like an American Crow at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 25 November 2016. The American Crow is known to occur with certainty in Alaska only at Hyder (based on specimens collected there in 1986 and 1987; Gibson and Kessel 1992), where it has been reported annually and nesting has been documented on numerous occasions. It otherwise ranges east of the Coast Mountains north to adjacent north-central interior British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1997). It is migratory over most of its British Columbia range and has been reported with increasing frequency north to southern Yukon (Alexander et al. 2003)—thus, it is not unreasonable to think interior American Crows could occasionally appear in Southeast. Although the Auke Bay bird would seem to be, by voice, an American Crow, the two species differ only subtly. Indeed, they are thought to be “not distinguishable by appearance and doubtfully identified by voice” (Sibley
2014) and “perhaps not safely separated... by in-hand criteria alone” (Pyle et al. 1997)—some authorities consider them to be conspecific (e.g., see A. M. Rea in Phillips 1986 and Verbeek and Butler 1999).

![Lewis's Woodpecker](image1.jpg)

HORNED LARK: The Horned Lark is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska, primarily on the mainland. A flock of six at Sitka 2 October 2016 (EVP, MRG; Figure 12) established a new local high count, and another was reported at the Mendenhall Wetlands 5 November 2016 (GBV). One of the Sitka birds had the yellow face and throat of the Asian subspecies *flava*, which is a casual migrant in the Bering Sea area east to south-central Alaska (Gibson and Withrow 2015). Similar yellow-faced birds photographed at Juneau 6 December 2007 (PAR) and Gustavus 31 October 2010 (NKD) provided the only prior Southeast reports.

![Horned Lark](image2.jpg)

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD: A Mountain Bluebird was observed in the alpine at Blackerby Ridge, near Juneau, 27 August 2016 (MS). This species occurs primarily along the mainland of Southeast Alaska, where it is a locally uncommon spring migrant and a rare fall migrant and winter visitant.

![Mountain Bluebird](image3.jpg)

TOWNSEND’S SOLITAIRE: A Townsend’s Solitaire at Sitka 25–26 November 2016 (LK, MRG) provided the only report. This species is a rare migrant and probable breeder in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).
Figure 11.—Alaska’s 5th Tropical Kingbird was present at Sitka 19–29 October 2016. This species is easily separated from the similar Western and Cassin’s kingbirds; however, it is best separated from the nearly identical Couch’s Kingbird by its high-pitched trilling call, which Matt Goff recorded on 20 October (top photos 19 October 2016; Matt R. Goff; bottom photos 30 October 2016; James D. Levison).

EUROPEAN STARLING: A single flock of 103 European Starlings at the Juneau Pioneer Home marsh 10 November 2016 (GBV) was the largest single flock yet recorded in the Juneau area. Another flock of 60 was found at the Sandy Beach 30 November 2016 (ACC).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: A flock of 25 Bohemian Waxwings at Skagway 28 October 2016 (CEF) furnished the first report of the season. Bohemian Waxwings were found at Juneau in slightly better numbers than normal in November (maximum 21 on 27 November 2016, GBV), and first arrivals at Gustavus were noted 25 November 2016 (12 birds, NKD).
CEDAR WAXWING: An immature Cedar Waxwing at Sitka 3–30 November 2016+ (CPFG) was very late. Four juveniles attended and fed by adults provided a nice breeding record at Gustavus 30 August 2016 (BBP).

RED-THROATED PIPIT: Two Red-throated Pipits were found at Gustavus: singles on 27 September 2016 and 29 September 2016 (NKD; Figure 13). There are now nearly 10 Southeast Alaska reports of this Eurasian species, which is a casual fall migrant along the Pacific Coast east and south of the Bering Sea region.

Figure 12.—Two Horned Larks photographed at Sitka 2 October 2016—the bird in the background is the expected Alaska-nesting subspecies arcticola, while the bird in the foreground is likely the yellow-faced Asian subspecies flava. Photo by Eric V. Parker

Figure 13.—Red-throated Pipit at Gustavus 29 September 2016. This bird is easily separated from the American Pipit by the sharp, bold black streaking on the underparts, the pale buff and black streaks on the back, the heavy black malar line that forms a patch at the base of the neck, and the pink legs. Photo by Nat K. Drumheller

HOUSE FINCH: A House Finch at a Ketchikan feeder 17 October–30 November 2016 (JFK; SCH; Figure 14) provided the 7th local record and 11th Alaska record (and first in fall). House Finch populations have experienced “significant ongoing” range expansion since the early 1900s (Badyaev et al. 2012)—it was unknown in British Columbia prior to 1935 but is now common in the southern part of the province (Campbell et al. 2001) and continues to expand north (Badyaev et al. 2012).
CROSSBILLS: Crossbills of both species continued to be found in very low numbers throughout the region, a situation that has held for at least a year. Maximum counts of Red Crossbills were 75 at Petersburg 14 November 2016 (RBB) and 100 at Ketchikan 5 and 12 November 2016 (SCH), but very small numbers were otherwise reported most of the season. Maximum counts of White-winged Crossbills were 60 at Gustavus 14 November 2016 (NKD), 40 at Juneau 15 November 2016 (ACC), and 30 at Petersburg 14 November 2016 (RBB), and they were reported in small numbers most of the season in the Juneau area.

![Figure 14.](image)

**Figure 14.**—A House Finch (left; 17 October 2016) and a Spotted Towhee (right; 23 October 2016) were among the interesting birds found at Ketchikan this fall. *Photos by Steven C. Heinl*

COMMON REDPOLL: Common Redpolls were first reported at Juneau 10 October 2016 (GBV) and Gustavus 12 October 2016 (NKD); however, few were reported away from the Juneau area, where 35 was maximum on 30 October 2016 (GBV).

PINE SISKIN: Pine Siskins were present in very low numbers throughout the region—large flocks at Juneau 13 November 2016 (300; GBV) and Ketchikan 30 October 2016 (250; SCH) and 12 November 2016 (300; SCH) were anomalies.

TENNESSEE WARBLER: Single Tennessee Warblers were found at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 6 November 2016 (GBV) and Ketchikan 19 November 2016 (SCH, JHL, photos). This species is a rare spring migrant and local breeder on the mainland (Kessel and Gibson 1978) and a casual fall migrant throughout Southeast.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT: A Common Yellowthroat was rare on the outer coast at Sitka 3 September 2016 (CPFG, photo).

CAPE MAY WARBLER: Among the more exciting finds of the fall was a well-documented Cape May Warbler at Sitka 2 November 2016 (MRG; Figure 15), only the 3rd to be found in Southeast Alaska. The bird frequented Castle Hill, where at times it was also accompanied by a Townsend’s, two Yellow-rumped, an Orange-crowned, and two Palm warblers! The Cape May Warbler was seen by many and last observed 14 November 2016 (GSB). Although this species nests as close as northeastern British Columbia and southeastern Yukon (Dunn and Garrett 1997) there are only about 15 Alaska records.

YELLOW WARBLER: A Yellow Warbler at Ketchikan 2 November 2016 (SCH) was the last reported for the season.
Figure 15.—Southeast Alaska’s 3rd Cape May Warbler record was an immature male at Sitka, here photographed on 2 November 2016 (left) and 5 November 2016 (right). *Photos by Matt R. Goff*

BLACKPOLL WARBLER: A Blackpoll Warbler fed in large crab apple trees for four consecutive days at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 4–7 September 2016 (GBV, PAR; Figure 16). This species is a sparse breeder on the mainland and a casual fall migrant in Southeast Alaska.

PALM WARBLER: The Palm Warbler is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska, but this fall saw the best showing ever. At least four were found in the Juneau area, where there are now about 19 reports: singles 7 October 2016 (PAR, ACC, MWS), 15–17 October 2016 (ACC, m.obs.; Figure 17), 19 October 2016 (GBV), and 7 November 2016 (PAR). One at Ketchikan 30 October 2016 (SCH, JHL) represented the 10th local record. At least three were located at Sitka: two during 4–7 November 2016 (MRG, m.obs.; Figure 17) and one on 24 November 2016 (HB). Palm Warblers nest as close as southeastern Yukon and northeastern British Columbia and are “among the most numerous ‘eastern’ warblers” found during fall migration along the West Coast of North America (Dunn and Garrett 1997).

Figure 16.—Immature Blackpoll Warbler at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 4 September 2016. Key field marks visible in this photo include the white tail spots, white undertail coverts, white markings on the wings (wingbar, primary tips, and tertial edgings), dusky streaks on flanks, and pale feet. *Photo by Patty A. Rose*
Figure 17.—Fall 2016 produced a bumper crop of Palm Warblers, including these birds at Juneau 17 October 2016 (left; photo by Cameron D. Eckert) and Sitka 4 November 2016 (right; photo by Matt R. Goff).

TOWNSEND’S WARBLER: Late Townsend’s Warblers included singles at Sitka 4–12 November 2016 (MRG) and Ketchikan 12–20 November 2016 (SCH).

WILSON’S WARBLER: A Wilson’s Warbler at the Mendenhall Wetlands 14–17 November 2016 (PAR) was late.

SPOTTED TOWHEE: A Spotted Towhee returned to a feeder at Lemon Creek, Juneau, for its 4th consecutive year 23 October 2016+ (JR; m.obs.)—in previous winters the bird stayed until mid-March. Another at Ketchikan 6 November 2016 (SCH; Figure 17) provided only the 2nd local record. There are at least 15 Alaska records of this species, which breeds as close as southern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW: An American Tree Sparrow at the Mendenhall Wetlands 10 September 2016 (GBV) was early. Peak numbers were lower than average at Juneau (maximum seven on 9 October 2016; BAA, PAR) and Gustavus (maximum 10 on 20 October 2016; NKD).

FOX SPARROW: Single Red Fox Sparrows at Juneau 20 November 2016 (JR) and 29–30 October 2016 (BAA, PAR) provided the only reports. This interior Taiga breeder (subspecies zaboria) is a rare, annual fall and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska; it is reported more frequently (and earlier) in northern Southeast.

SONG SPARROW: Among the migrants Gus van Vliet recorded at Auke Bay this fall were first-arriving dark-gray (or sooty colored) Song Sparrows representing subspecies that nest along the North Gulf Coast to the north and west of Southeast Alaska. One on 7 August 2016 was early and was followed by arrivals of single birds from 31 August and into September (GBV). Subspecies kenaiensis/caurina nest from the Kenai Peninsula east to Prince William Sound, the Yakutat area, and possibly to Cross Sound; they are partly migratory and some spend the winter from Southeast Alaska south to the Pacific Northwest (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1951, 1959; Arcese et al. 2002; Gibson and Withrow 2015).
SWAMP SPARROW: Single Swamp Sparrows were found at Gustavus 20 October 2016 (NKD), at the Mendenhall Wetlands 28 October 2016 (PAR; Figure 18), and at Ketchikan 22 October 2016 (SCH) and 26 November 2016+ (SCH, JHL, photo). This species is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska, where it has been found nearly annually over the past 15 years. It nests as close as northeastern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: It was the best season ever for White-throated Sparrows at Ketchikan, where no fewer than 13 individuals were found 1 October–27 November 2016 (SCH, JFK, JHL, AWP; Figure 18)—two more in December brought the “fall” total at Ketchikan to 15 birds. Elsewhere, at least three were found at Sitka 21 October 2016+ (MRG, RBB, LEB, m.obs.), and singles turned up at Petersburg 22 October 2016 (BLH) and at Juneau 7–14 November 2016 (PAR, BAA, MWS, GBV) and 18 November 2016+ (CM, JAM, AM, CLM, LRSS, JM). This species is a rare migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska, primarily in October–November. It nests as close as north-central British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

Figure 18.—Swamp Sparrow at Juneau 28 October 2016 (left; photo by Patty A. Rose) and White-throated Sparrow at Ketchikan 27 November 2016 (right; photo by Jim H. Lewis).

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: Small numbers of Puget Sound White-crowned Sparrows were found this fall at Ketchikan, including four each on 22 October 2016 (one adult, three imm.) and 19 November 2016 (four imm.; SCH).

WESTERN MEADOWLARK: Two Western Meadowlarks were found at Ketchikan this fall, one on 22 and 29 October 2016, and a different bird on 27 November 2016 (SCH; Figure 19). This species breeds north to central and northeastern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001) and is a casual fall and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska. Ketchikan accounts for 15 of the 24 state records.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD: A total of 33 Rusty Blackbirds at Juneau 17 October 2016 (GBV, et al.) provided a new local high count for fall; a single bird at Sitka 19 November 2016 (MRG) was rare on the outer coast.

BREWER’S BLACKBIRD: A female Brewer’s Blackbird at the Gustavus dump 9 September 2016 (BBP) lingered to at least 21 September 2016 (NKD; Figure 19). This species is a very rare visitant to Southeast Alaska (Gibson and Withrow 2015)—there are now more than 25 records, and it has been found nearly annually over the last 15 years.
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD: Brown-headed Cowbird reports included single juveniles at Ketchikan 12 and 24 August 2016 (SCH), two adult males at Gustavus 20 August 2016 and another there (age?) 1 September 2016 (BBP), and single juveniles at Hoonah 22 August 2016 (ACC) and Sitka 3 September 2016 (EVP, photo). This species is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

**Figure 19.** Rare Icterids included a Western Meadowlark at Ketchikan 29 October 2016 (left; photo by Steven C. Heinl) and a Brewer’s Blackbird at Gustavus 21 September 2016 (right; photo by Nat K. Drumheller).

**LITERATURE CITED**


