SUMMARY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRD OBSERVATIONS:

Spring: March–May 2017

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This report summarizes bird sightings from Southeast Alaska for the spring season, March–May 2017, 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)—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 included a Turkey Vulture (4th documented Southeast Alaska record), two Swainson’s Hawks (singles at Sitka and Juneau), an exceptionally early Cassin’s Vireo (Juneau), and a fallout of Say’s Phobes at Skagway and Juneau.

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)—at least 75% of the sightings included here had been entered in eBird. I would like to thank Gus van Vliet for reviewing the enormous quantity of eBird data from Juneau, and Gus, Nat Drumheller, Andy Piston, and Matt Goff provided information and reviews that improved the final draft of this summary. Past seasonal reports (since fall 2008) are archived at the Juneau Audubon website: http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org/SE%20AK%20Birding.html.

Southeast Alaska: The biogeographic region of “Southeast Alaska” was roughly outlined by Kessel and Gibson (1978, p. iv) to include the Alaska mainland and islands east of (approximately) Cape Fairweather and south to Dixon Entrance, and ocean waters up to 200 nautical miles offshore.

Checklist of Alaska Birds: A list of all 510 species of birds known in Alaska is compiled and maintained by the Alaska Checklist Committee and is available free online at: http://www.universityofalaskamuseumbirds.org/products/checklist.pdf.

Names and Initials of observers cited in the text or who reported sightings: Beverly A. Agler (BAA), Gwen S. Baluss (GSB), R. Brad Benter (RBB), Briana Bode (BB), Molly Briggs (MB), Ryan Carpenter (RC), Jennifer A. Cedarleaf (JAC), Carey Cooper (CC), Amy C. Courtney (ACC), LeeAnne Deane (LD), Bonnie H. Demerjian (BHD), Tasha J. DiMarzio (TJD), Boris Dobrowolsky (BD), Philip S. Doherty (PSD), John Doty (JD), Nat K. Drumheller (NKD), Cameron D. Eckert (CDE), Paulette Eppel (PE), Kyle Farley-Robinson (KF), Scott Fischer (SF), Betsy Fischer (BF), C. Elaine Furbish (CEF), Jane Ginter (JG), Connor P. F. Goff (CPFG), Matt R. Goff (MRG), Steven C. Heinl (SCH), Brad L. Hunter (BLH), Meg Jensen (MJ), Eric Johnson (EJ), Karen Johnson (KJ), Kelly Kirkpatrick (KK), Jerrold F. Koerner (JFK), Mike Konsler (MK), Randy Korotev (RK), Laurie A. Lamm (LAL), Kris R. Larson (KRL), Paul E. Lehman (PEL), Jim H. Lewis (JHL), Mary J. McCafferty (MJM), John McDermott (JMc), Amy Millsaps (AM), Cody Millsaps (CM), C. L. Millsaps (CLM), J. A. Millsaps (JAM), J Millsaps (JM), Valerie Nideeain (VN), Bruce B. Paige (BBP), Colin Peacock (CP), Andrew W. Piston (AWP), Larry Platt (LP), Pam T. H. Randles (PTHR), Becky Regula (BR), Jason Regula (JRe), Joann Rieselbach (JR), K. Rieselbach (KR), Kathy M. Ripley (KMR), Jeff Robinson (JRo), Patty A. Rose (PAR), Deb O. Ross (DOR), Deborah Rudis (DDR), Daniel R. Ruthrauff (DRR), Jeffrey F. Sauer (JFS), L. R. Slim Schonert (LRSS), Mark W. Schwan (MWS), Barbara Shepherd (BS), David W. Sonneborn (DWS), Marsha Squires (MS), Owen Squires (OS), Cole Talbot (CT), David Thynes (DT), Ray Tsang (RT), Gus B. van Vliet (GBV), Victoria Vasburg (VV), Serena Wild (SW), Helen Wiggins (HW), E. L. “Butch” Young (ELY).
SPECIES ACCOUNTS:

**NOTE:** The phylogenetic sequence of the orders, families, genera, and species of birds was changed substantially by the American Ornithological Society in their most recent supplements to the *Check-list of North American Birds* (Chesser et al. 2016 and 2017). 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.

ROSS’S GOOSE: A Ross’s Goose at Gustavus 7–16 April 2017 (NKD) provided the 3rd local record and about the 8th record for Southeast Alaska, all of which are from spring. This goose is a casual visitant along the south and north coasts of Alaska (Gibson and Withrow 2015).

SNOW GOOSE: An estimated 4,000 Snow Geese were at the Stikine River mouth 29 April 2017 (DRR, GSB), the only migration staging site for this species in Southeast Alaska.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: At least one “Tule” Goose (*Anser albifrons elgasi*) at Ketchikan 13 May 2017 (SCH, AWP; Figure 1) provided the 1st local record and only about the 4th or 5th documented record for Southeast Alaska. This form, the largest and darkest subspecies of the Greater White-fronted Goose, nests in boreal forests of the upper Cook Inlet basin and winters largely in central California; in spring, most fly directly to Cook Inlet from staging sites in Oregon (Ely et al. 2005 and 2006, Densmore et al. 2006). One Ketchikan bird wore a neck collar/radio that had been attached at Summer Lake, Oregon, 19 September 2013; it spent winters primarily at Delevan NWR, Colusa County, California, and was relocated at various sites in Upper Cook Inlet, Alaska, in June and August 2014 (Melanie Weaver, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, pers. comm.).

![Figure 1](image-url)  
*Figure 1.* This trio of Greater White-fronted Geese at Ketchikan 13 May 2017 included a neck-collared Tule Goose (right). The bird in the center is probably also a Tule Goose, based on its darker, more massive head and neck and longer bill compared to the bird on the left, which is a smaller, paler bird typical of migrants in Southeast Alaska. *Photo by Steven C. Heinl*
TUNDRA SWAN: A Tundra Swan at the Mendenhall Forelands, near Juneau, 1–15 May 2017 (DWS, GBV; m.obs.) was very late. The latest date for the Juneau area is 23 May 2010 (BAA), and there is only one documented summer record for Southeast Alaska.

WOOD DUCK: The drake Wood Duck present at Sitka since February 2016 was last observed in late May (m.obs.; fide MRG). A pair of Wood Ducks turned up at Juneau’s Rotary Park on 22 April 2017 (ACC, SF, BF, PAR, MWS, GBV)—the same location where a female was observed the previous spring (13 April–22 May 2016). The pair was joined by a second male on 16 May 2017 and a third male on 23 May 2017 (BS). The female was observed to copulate with one of the males on 24 May 2017 (GBV). On 31 May 2017 four males were present (but not the female; GBV), and multiple birds were observed there into the summer. In addition to Sitka’s long-staying drake (above), there are four prior Southeast Alaska summer reports from the mainland: a male at Barnes Lake, Stikine River, in 1976 (Kessel and Gibson 1978), single females at the Taku River and the Chilkat River in 2000 (Johnson et al. 2008), and a female at Barnes Lake in 2012.

NORTHERN SHOVELER: A pair of Northern Shovelers at Shake’s Island, near Wrangell, 3 March 2017 (CT) and one at Ketchikan in early March (JHL) likely represented wintering birds, as spring migrants do not typically arrive until late April.

EURASIAN WIGEON: Two Eurasian Wigeon that wintered at Sitka were reported through at least 8–10 April 2017 (MRG). A male that wintered at the Mendenhall Wetlands was present to at least late March (JFS, GSB, LAL), and at least three were reported in the Juneau area 23 April–13 May 2017 (m.obs.). Two Eurasian Wigeon were found at Gustavus 24 March 2017 (NKD), followed by at least one there 7 April, 7 May (NKD), and 17 May 2017 (BBP). Finally, a male was reported at the Stikine River mouth 29 April 2017 (DRR, GSB).

Figure 2.—Spruce Grouse of two subspecies occur at opposite ends of Southeast Alaska. The wide-ranging nominate Spruce Grouse (*Falcipennis canadensis canadensis*) occurs in Southeast Alaska only on the northernmost mainland (Gibson and Withrow 2015). It is common in the Skagway area (fide CEF) where the male on the left was photographed 16 May 2017 (LD). Note the overall grayish tone to the bird’s plumage, rusty tipped tail feathers, and lack of white tips on the upper tail coverts. The Prince of Wales Spruce Grouse (*F. c. isleibi*) is endemic to Prince of Wales, Zarembo, and nearby smaller islands (Dickerman and Gustafson 1996, Gibson and Withrow 2015). The male on the right was photographed at Coffman Cove, Prince of Wales Island, 14 May 2017 (KRL). Note the browner tone to the bird’s plumage, narrow white tips on the upper tail coverts, and lack of pale tips on the tail feathers.
CANVASBACK: Canvasbacks were reported only at Gustavus: one on 28 April 2017, followed by two on 1 May 2017 and four on 3 May 2017 (NKD).

REDHEAD: Redhead reports were few as usual: one at the Mendenhall Wetlands 11–13 May 2017 (MWS, GBV, MS, OS, KF) and two at Lake Gustavus 1–7 May 2017 (NKD).

WESTERN GREBE: A Western Grebe at Gustavus 29 March 2017 provided only the 3rd local spring record, all since 2013 (NKD). This species is locally common on inside waters from Sumner Strait south (Kessel and Gibson 1978), but it is a rare, annual visitant north of that area, primarily in fall and winter.

BAND-TAILED PIGEON: Band-tailed Pigeons arrived at Ketchikan feeders 2 April 2017 (PSD) and 3 April 2017 (KMR). Maximum was 15 birds and 14 birds at two different feeders on 14 May 2017 (JFK, SCH).

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Eurasian Collared-Dove reports were about on par with the winter. Small numbers (single digits) were reported in most towns, and around 10 or so were reported in the Juneau area and 15 in the Ketchikan area (m.obs.).

ANNA’S HUMMINGBIRD: For the 3rd consecutive spring, a male Rufous × Anna’s hummingbird displayed on territory, from the same snag in the same muskeg, at Point Lena Loop Road, near Juneau, from 22 April 2017 through at least 25 June 2017 (MJM, m.obs.; Figure 3). The bird’s arrival and departure dates were carefully established through daily observations at the site (MJM).

Single male and female Anna’s Hummingbirds were last observed at a Ketchikan feeder 27 March 2017 (two; JFK). Others were reported elsewhere at Ketchikan later in the spring, including a male that sang on a territory in a scrubby vacant lot (away from feeders) 12 May 2017+ (SCH, AWP). Two were reported at Juneau: a wintering male through at least 7 March 2017 (GBV) and another male at a feeder 16–17 May 2017 (JM, CLM, LRSS, JAM, CM). Singles were also reported at Petersburg 21–24 April 2017 (ELY) and Skagway 10 May 2017 (BBP), and at least one was present all spring at Sitka (MRG).

Figure 3.—This hybrid Anna’s × Rufous hummingbird was photographed near Juneau 28 April 2017 on the exact same perch it favored in spring/summer 2015 and 2016. Photo by Mark W. Schwan
RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD: The first Rufous Hummingbird reports were slightly late at Ketchikan 6 April 2017 (SCH, AWP, KRL) and 7 April 2017 (JFK). First reported dates elsewhere included 10 April 2017 at Petersburg (BLH), 12 April 2017 at Gustavus (*fide* NKD), and 14 April 2017 at both Sitka (MRG) and Juneau (a female; JM, AM, CM, CLM, LRSS, JAM).

VIRGINIA RAIL: The Virginia Rail that was rescued and released at Sitka’s Swan Lake in January was resighted on 9 March 2017 (SW) and observed through 11 March 2017 (m.obs.; Figure 4).

![Figure 4](image)

Figure 4.—This Virginia Rail at Sitka 10 March 2017, apparently recovered just fine from its encounter with a house cat on 8 January 2017. Photo by Matt R. Goff

SANDHILL CRANE: Sandhill Cranes were reported migrating over the Wrangell/Petersburg area 16–26 April 2017 (MJ, BLH, BHD, ELY). A total of 688 were observed at Mitkof Island 20 April 2017, most of which were in one flock that appeared to have just left staging areas at the mouth of the Stikine River (BLH). Flocks totaling at least 1300 birds were observed flying over Wrangell toward the Stikine River on 21 April 2017 (MJ; BHD).

Kris Larson found plenty of Sandhill Crane action on Prince of Wales Island in May. Of particular note, was a nest with two eggs on the western end of the Soda Bay peninsula on 12 May 2017 (Figure 5). The nest was at the edge of a pond bordering a large muskeg; an adult flushed from the nest and performed a distraction display in an attempt to lure Kris away. Another pair was observed displaying near the south side of Upper Sarkar Lake on 10 May 2017, and multiple other pairs were found 8–14 May 2017 at various locations between Whale Pass and Hydaburg. The cranes nesting on Prince of Wales and elsewhere in southern Southeast Alaska are Greater Sandhill Cranes (subspecies *tabida*; Gibson and Withrow 2015).

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER: The American Golden-Plover, normally a rare or uncommon migrant, went unreported this spring.

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER: Pacific Golden-Plovers were reported in typical very small numbers 24 April–19 May 2017 (m.obs.); maximum was five at the Mendenhall Wetlands 4 May 2017 (GBV).

BAR-TAILED GODWIT: A Bar-tailed Godwit was found at Eagle Beach, near Juneau, 21 May 2017 (PAR, photo; m.obs.). Nearly all Southeast Alaska reports of this casual migrant are from Gustavus and Juneau.
HUDSONIAN GODWIT: Hudsonian Godwits were reported at several sites on the northern Southeast mainland, where this species is a rare annual migrant. One at Gustavus 28 April 2017 (NKD), the first report of the spring, was followed by sightings of one–two through 25 May 2017 (BBP); maximum was seven there on 6 May 2017 (NKD). Two were at the Mendenhall Wetlands 3 May 2017 (MWS; Figure 6), followed by one there 10 May 2017 (KK). Maximum at Haines was 10 on 5–6 May 2017 (PTHR). Finally, a Hudsonian Godwit was present at Sitka 10–14 May 2017 (JAC, VV; Figure 6), where this species has now been reported in six of the past seven springs.

Figure 5. The Greater Sandhill Crane (subspecies *tabida*) is an uncommon breeder in southern Southeast Alaska. A nest with two eggs was found on the Soda Bay peninsula, Prince of Wales Island, 12 May 2017 (left). The pair on the right, at Prince of Wales Island 14 May 2017 (right), was amongst multiple pairs that were observed in muskeg habitat in central Prince of Wales Island 8–14 May 2017. *Photos by Kris Larson*

Figure 6.–Hudsonian Godwits at the Mendenhall Wetlands 3 May 2017 (left; *photo by Mark W. Schwan*) and Sitka 10 May 2017 (right; *photo by Matt R. Goff*).
MARbled Godwit: Marbled Godwits were observed at Sitka 19 April–8 May 2017 (maximum four on 19 April 2017; MRG), Gustavus 22 April–24 May 2017 (maximum nine on 3 May 2017; NKD), and Juneau (one 7 May 2017, MWS, GBV; two 25 May 2017, MWS, PAR).

Red Knot: Typical small numbers of Red Knots were reported 5–24 May 2017 (m.obs); 17 at Gustavus 18 May 2017 (BBP) and four at Eagle Beach, near Juneau, 21 May 2017 (PAR, BAA, MWS, GBV) were maximums at those sites. Singles were also reported at Sitka 6 May 2017 (RC, MRG) and Ketchikan 14 May 2017 (AWP).

Sandpiper: Three Sanderlings at Sitka 13 May 2017 (KJ) and one at Eagle Beach 19 May 2017 (PAR) were rare, as were six at Ketchikan 13 May 2017 (AWP, SCH), where the species is of less than annual occurrence.

Dunlin: An estimated 4,000 Dunlin were observed with other shorebirds at the mouth of the Stikine River 29 April 2017 (GSB, DRR).

Baird’s Sandpiper: A Baird’s Sandpiper at Sitka 5–6 May 2017 (MRG, RC; photo) provided a rare local sighting, as this species is not reported there annually. Normal, very small numbers were otherwise reported at Gustavus (one on 7 May 2017 NKD, followed by two 16 May 2017 (BBP) and one 25 May 2017 (BBP) and the Juneau area (at least one at the Mendenhall Wetlands 9–12 May 2017 MWS, JD, GBV; two at Eagle Beach 12 May 2017, GBV).

Western Sandpiper: An estimated 36,000 Western Sandpipers were observed at the mouth of the Stikine River 29 April 2017 (GSB, DRR).

Greeter Yellowlegs: The first Greater Yellowlegs reports of the spring were three at Gustavus 28 March 2017 (NKD) and one at Ketchikan 2 April 2017 (SCH, AWP). A nest with four eggs was a great find at a Mitkof Island muskeg 13 May 2017 (EJ; Figure 7). The chicks had just started to pip their eggs on 20 May 2017. Although this species is an uncommon breeder in Southeast Alaska, primarily in muskeg habitat, there are not many documented nests for the southern half of the region. The adults call loudly and persistently at the sight of a human intruder, often flying in from a long distance to dive on and fly around the intruder—behavior that makes locating nests and downy young extremely difficult (Piston and Heinl 2006).

Thick-billed Murre: A Thick-billed Murre was observed at the mouth of Silver Bay, near Sitka, 26 May 2017 (MRG, photo). Thick-billed Murres nest at nearby St. Lazaria Island; e.g., Nelson et al. (1987) estimated about 2,900 Common and 2,200 Thick-billed Murres were present at St. Lazaria on 18 June 1981.

Parakeet Auklet: A Parakeet Auklet was photographed off Bjorka Island, southwest of Sitka, 22 March 2017 (KJ; Figure 8). Small numbers of Parakeet Auklets have been reported in the vicinity of Southeast Alaska alcid nesting colonies in the past; e.g., two near Kruzof Island 25 June 1981 (Am. Birds 35:970), six at Petrel Island, near Forrester Island, 21 July 1982 (Am. Birds 36:1008), and eight in the Sitka Sound area in July 2000 (Piatt and Dragoo 2005). Although it was reported to breed in very small numbers at the three major Southeast Alaska seabird breeding colonies (St. Lazaria, Hazy, and Forrester islands; Jones et al. 2001), breeding has apparently not been substantiated.
Figure 7. A Greater Yellowlegs nest was found at the base of a small patch of lodgepole pines at the edge of a Mitkof Island muskeg on 13 May 2017 (left). The chicks likely hatched on 20 May 2017, and only shell fragments were found on 24 May 2017. Photos by Briana Bode

Figure 8—A Parakeet Auklet off Biorka Island, southwest of Sitka, 22 March 2017 was a rare find for Southeast Alaska. Photo by Karen Johnson

ICELAND GULL: The American Ornithological Society’s Committee on Classification and Nomenclature voted to formally treat the Thayer’s Gull as a subspecies of the Iceland Gull (Chesser et al. 2017)—thus, the AOU Checklist of the Birds of North America finally falls in line with the Checklist of Alaska Birds (Gibson and Withrow 2015).

A nice estimate of 500 Thayer’s Gulls (Larus glaucoides thayeri) at Sitka 24 April 2017 was considered normal for spring in that area (MRG). Single Kumlien’s Gulls (L. g. kumlieni) were identified amongst the Thayer’s Gulls at Sitka 30 March 2017 and 19 April 2017 (CPFG; Figure 9).

SLATY-BACKED GULL: At least three Slaty-backed Gulls, two adults and one 3rd-cycle bird, were identified at Sitka 27 March–19 April 2017 (MRG, CPFG; Figure 10).
Figure 9.—A Sitka gull aficionado skillfully picked out two Kumlien’s type Iceland Gulls (*Larus glaucoides kumlieni*) this spring: a 1st-cycle bird on 30 March 2017 (left; or 2nd-cycle?) and a 1st-cycle bird on 19 April 2017 (right). There are probably a dozen or so documented records of this subspecies for Southeast Alaska. *Photos by Connor Goff*

Figure 10.—Lucky Sitka birders enjoyed plenty of gull action this spring, including an adult Slaty-backed Gull 2 April 2017 (left; *photo by Matt R. Goff*) and a 3rd-cycle Slaty-backed Gull 29 March 2017 (right; *photo by Connor Goff*).

**CASPIAN TERN:** First arriving Caspian Terns were noted at Gustavus 21 April 2017 (NKD); maximum in that area was 20 on 29 May 2017 (PE). Small numbers were reported in the Juneau area beginning 4 May 2017 (GBV, KK), where maximum was eight on 9 May 2017 (JD). Typical small numbers were reported elsewhere: one at Haines 10 May 2017 (CC), two near Ketchikan 12 May 2017 (CC), two at Ketchikan on 14 May 2017 (AWP), and two at Sitka 18 May 2017 (MRG).

**ALEUTIAN TERN:** Two Aleutian Terns were (perhaps) slightly early at Glacier Bay 13 May 2017 (PEL), the only location in Southeast Alaska where this species is regularly found. The earliest local arrival date is 2 May 2015 (NKD, photo).
BRANDT’S CORMORANT: An adult Brandt’s Cormorant photographed near Sitka 7 April 2017 (MRG; Figure 11) provided about the 4th local record in recent years. Typical small numbers were observed in the Ketchikan area through 6 April 2017 (SCH, AWP).

![Image of Brandt's Cormorant](https://www.sitkanature.org)

Figure 11.–Close inspection of this flock of cormorants, photographed near Sitka 7 April 2017, reveals that one is an adult Brandt’s Cormorant (the lone bird at the bottom center of the photo). Note the big patch of white “whiskers” on the side of the bird’s head. *Photo by Matt R. Goff*

TURKEY VULTURE: A Turkey Vulture at Wrangell 10 April 2017 (VN; Figure 12) was a surprise, not only because this species is a casual visitant to Alaska, but also because it provided the earliest Alaska record by 15 days. There are now four documented records for Southeast Alaska.

SWAINSON’S HAWK: A Swainson’s Hawk observed in flight at Sitka 3 May 2017 (CPFG; Figure 13), provided the 1st Southeast Alaska record away from the mainland. Another Swainson’s Hawk at the Mendenhall Wetlands 10–16 May 2017 (MS, MJM; m.obs.; Figure 13) was at a more expected location, though still a very rare sighting. In Alaska, this raptor is found primarily in the eastern Interior, where it is rare (Tobish 2004); there are now more than 10 Southeast Alaska records, most of which are from the Juneau area in spring and early summer.

RED-TAILED HAWK: A nice flight of raptors at Ketchikan 7 April 2017 included a local record 35 Red-tailed Hawks, as well as 90 Bald Eagles, 1 Northern Harrier, 10 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and 1 Merlin (SCH, AWP). The birds were observed crossing over lower George/Carroll inlets, just east of Mountain Point, a location where raptors have been observed moving north in past springs.
Figure 12.—This Turkey Vulture at Wrangell 10 April 2017 provided only the 4th documented Southeast Alaska record. *Photo by Valerie Ni hEideain*

Figure 13.—Two Swainson’s Hawks were found in Southeast Alaska this spring: a light-morph bird at Sitka 3 May 2017 (left; *photo by Connor Goff*) and a dark-morph bird at Juneau 10–16 May 2017 (right 13 May 2017; *photo by Mark W. Schwan*).

**SNOWY OWL:** A late winter/early spring Snowy Owl was reported at Gustavus 12 March 2017 (LP, et al.; *fide NKD*).

**NORTHERN HAWK OWL:** A Northern Hawk Owl was found at Boy Scout Camp, near Juneau, 22 April 2017 (CP, m.obs.; MB; Figure 14). This owl is very rare in Southeast Alaska and most reports are from the northern mainland.
Figure 14.—The Western Screech-Owl, a rare resident throughout Southeast Alaska, was first described from a specimen collected at Sitka (Elliot 1867), where the bird on the left was photographed 8 March 2017 (photo by Matt R. Goff). The Northern Hawk Owl has been recorded throughout Southeast Alaska, though it occurs regularly and in very small numbers only on the northern mainland—the Northern Hawk Owl on the right was found near Juneau 22 April 2017 (photo by Molly Briggs).

NORTHERN FLICKER: Three Northern Flickers at Juneau 21 and 25 April and 11 May 2017 (m. obs.) and one at Gustavus 17 May 2017 (BBP) were rare on the northern Southeast mainland.

AMERICAN KESTREL: Single American Kestrels at Gustavus 4 May 2017 (NKD) and the Mendenhall Wetlands 13 May 2017 (MWS) represented a very poor showing for spring.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER: An Olive-sided Flycatcher near Juneau 4 May 2017 (LAL) was early for northern Southeast. The only other reports this spring were one at Ketchikan 13 May 2017 (AWP, SCH), singles in the Juneau area 15 May 2017 (MJM) and 17 May 2017 (MWS), and three in the Juneau area 26 May 2017 (PAR, BAA, MWS, MJM, LAL).

HAMMOND’S FLYCATCHER: Two Hammond’s Flycatchers at the Mendenhall Forelands 4 May 2017 (JD, photo) were early.

PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER: A Pacific-slope Flycatcher at Hoonah 8 May 2017 (ACC) was early for northern Southeast.

SAY’S PHOEBE: Say’s Phoebes, which are not reported annually, turned up in two areas in northern Southeast on 12 May: two at Skagway (BBP) and four in the Juneau area (DDR, MWS, GBV, RK), one of which lingered near Juneau to 16 May 2017 (m.obs.). Kessel and Gibson (1978) described this species as a casual migrant in Southeast Alaska, primarily in the fall, and it was also considered a very rare probable breeder based on observations in Glacier Bay in the 1960s (Wik and Streveler 1968).

CASSIN’S VIREO: An extremely early Cassin’s Vireo at the Mendenhall Forelands, near Juneau, on 1 and 4 May 2017 (GBV, DWS; Figure 15; GSB, JD, LRSS) provided a new early arrival date for Alaska. Most Southeast sightings have been from mid- to late May and into June. Another singing bird was located in the Mendenhall Forelands 30 May 2017 (GBV). This vireo is a very rare annual visitant to mainland Southeast Alaska (DeCicco and Hajdukovich 2008).
Figure 15.—This Cassin’s Vireo was found in the Mendenhall Forelands 1 May 2017. It arrived before the
deciduous trees were even leafed out, and established a new early arrival date for Alaska by more
than a week. *Photo by David W. Sonneborn*

WARBLING VIREO: A Warbling Vireo at Ketchikan 10 May 2017 (SCH) was early.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE: Two Black-billed Magpies at Juneau (east Glacier Trails) 14 May 2017
(LRSS) were very late. Most magpies depart that area by the end of April.

HORNED LARK: Five Horned Larks near Juneau 27 May 2017 (MS) were very late.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW: A Violet-green Swallow at Sitka 2–3 May 2017 (MRG, Figure 16;
CPFG) provided a rare sighting for the outer coast. There are apparently few prior reports for the
Sitka area (*fide* MRG).

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW: Rare Northern Rough-winged Swallow sightings
included singles at Gustavus Lake (BBP) and Ketchikan (AWP) on 19 May 2017.

BANK SWALLOW: A Bank Swallow at Ketchikan 20 May 2017 (SCH) provided a rare local sighting.
This swallow is a locally uncommon to fairly common breeder along the mainland, but it is a rare
migrant in the Alexander Archipelago.

CLIFF SWALLOW: A Cliff Swallow at Sitka 2–3 May 2017 (MRG, Figure 16; CPFG) provided a very
rare sighting for the outer coast. A Cliff Swallow near Juneau 24 May 2017 (MWS) was also rare
and provided the first local spring report in four years.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: A Red-breasted Nuthatch at the Mendenhall Forelands 2 May 2017+
(GBV, JD, BAA, PAR) and at least one in the Gustavus area through 1 May 2017 (NKD) were
the only nuthatches reported this spring.
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD: The first Mountain Bluebird report of the spring was a small flock at Skagway 27 March 2017 (JMc). Maximum at Skagway was 25 birds on 7 April 2017 (JMc). Normal small numbers of Mountain Bluebirds were also observed in the Juneau area 5–14 April 2017 (m.obs.; Figure 17); maximum there was eight on 6 April 2017 (LAL). A female was observed 28 April 2017 at Sitka (MRG, CPFG, DWS, photo), where the species is of less than annual occurrence. The Mountain Bluebird is a locally uncommon spring migrant in Southeast Alaska, where it occurs primarily on the mainland.

TOWNSEND’S SOLITAIRE: Single Townsend’s Solitaires were reported in the Juneau area 13 April 2017 (LAL) and 20 April 2017 (SF, KK). This species is a rare migrant and probable breeder in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH: A Gray-cheeked Thrush at the Mendenhall Forelands 30 May 2017 (MWS) was in a location where a pair is often present during the summer (fide GBV). The Gray-cheeked Thrush occurs locally in Southeast Alaska at mainland rivers, and it is most numerous in extensive appropriate habitat in Glacier Bay and in the Alsek River drainage to the northwest (Johnson et al. 2008).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: An estimated 600 Bohemian Waxwings were still present in the Skagway area 16 March 2017 (CDE, BD). One at Gustavus 4 May 2017 (NKD) was extremely late. This species usually departs Southeast Alaska by early April, and there are not many May–September records for the region.

CEDAR WAXWING: Two Cedar Waxwings at Juneau 30 May 2017 (MJM) and seven at Ketchikan 31 May 2017 (SCH) were early.

AMERICAN PIPIT: American Pipits at the Mendenhall Wetlands 10 April 2017 (two; MWS) and 16 April 2017 (five; GSB) were early. A conservative 700 at the Mendenhall Wetlands 23 April 2017 (ACC) was easily the largest number ever recorded at that location and possibly the largest number ever reported at a single location in Southeast Alaska.
COMMON REDPOLL: Common Redpolls moved through the Juneau area from mid- to late March (m.obs.); counts of 100–150 birds were reported on many occasions, and six on 4 April 2107 (GBV) were the last of the season there. The last large flock of the season at Skagway was 300 on 22 March 2017 (MK). Redpolls were also present at Gustavus through 30 March 2017, where maximum was 200 on 28 March 2017 (NKD).

FINCHES: Finches were generally reported in poor to modest numbers, a trend that started in Fall 2015 and continued through this spring. Red Crossbills were present in small numbers in the Ketchikan area (maximum 30 on 17 May 2017; SCH, AWP). There were only three reports all spring at Juneau, and one report at Sitka 14 April 2017 (50 birds; MRG). None were reported at Gustavus all spring. White-winged Crossbills were reported most frequently in the Juneau area, but in low numbers, and there were only a few reports elsewhere. Pine Siskins were the most widely reported finch, but also mostly in small numbers.

SNOW BUNTING: Last dates for Snow Buntings were 30 at Gustavus 24 March 2017 (NKD), 80 at the Mendenhall Wetlands 26 March 2017 (PAR, BAA, MWS), and two at Skagway 31 March 2017 (RT).

SPOTTED TOWHEE: Wintering Spotted Towhees were last observed at Sitka 9 April 2017 (Howard Pendell) and Juneau 31 March 2017 (JR, KR, TJD).

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW: Two American Tree Sparrows at the Mendenhall Wetlands 13 May 2017 (BAA, MWS) were late.

FOX SPARROW: Single Red Fox Sparrows, subspecies zaboria, were found at Ketchikan 30 March 2017 (AWP, SCH) and at Juneau 18–19 April 2017 (CM, LRSS, JM, AM, JAM; photo) and 5 May 2017 (MWS, KF, OS).

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: A White-throated Sparrow that wintered at a Juneau area feeder began singing on 1 April, much to the delight of its hosts, and was last observed on the late date of 9 May 2017 (JAM, LRSS, AM, CM, JM, GSB). Singles at Thorne Bay 5 March 2017 (DOR), Ketchikan 1 April 2017 (AWP), and Wrangell 19 April and 28 April 2017 (BHD, HW) likely also represented wintering birds.
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: A Puget Sound White-crowned Sparrow (subspecies *pugetensis*) that wintered at Ketchikan was last observed 7 April 2017 (AWP, SCH). Four Puget Sound White-crowned Sparrows at the Ketchikan airport 23 April 2017 included two singing males and an additional pair (AWP, SCH)—an average number there since 2012.

WESTERN MEADOWLARK: The Western Meadowlark found at Petersburg 24 December 2016 turned up again in early April and was observed through at least 3 April 2017 (DT, JRo; *fide* BLH).

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD: Single Red-winged Blackbirds at Sitka (MRG, photo) and Wrangell (CT) on 1 March 2017 probably wintered in Southeast Alaska, as most migrants do not start moving into the area until late March.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD: A male Brown-headed Cowbird at Ketchikan 19 May 2017 (JFK) provided the season’s only report of this rare migrant.

BREWER’S BLACKBIRD: A Brewer’s Blackbird that wintered at Hoonah was last observed 30 March 2017 (RBB, photo).

TENNESSEE WARBLER: A Tennessee Warbler at the Mendenhall Forelands 29 May 2017 represented the first spring arrival in the Juneau area (MWS, BAA). This warbler is a rare migrant and local breeder on mainland southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978), and very small numbers have been found nearly annually in the Juneau area over the past 20 years.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER: A 2017 proposal to split the Yellow-rumped Warbler into three species, including the Audubon’s and Myrtle warblers (which have been treated as one species since 1973; A.O.U. 1973) was not accepted by the American Ornithological Society’s Committee on Classification and Nomenclature—so, for now, we still have the Yellow-rumped Warbler. There were many more reports of Audubon’s Warblers and Audubon’s × Myrtle warbler intergrades in the Juneau area than in past years. I don’t know if that actually reflected an increase in the numbers of those birds over past years, or if it was simply due to greater interest in them and in reporting them in eBird. At least 5 or 6 Audubon’s Warblers and a similar number of intergrades were reported in the Juneau area 24 April–28 May 2017 (m.obs.), some of which were well described. Photos of two birds identified as Audubon’s Warblers in eBird checklists, however, clearly showed them to be intergrades. Single Audubon’s Warblers were also reported at Kupreanof 7–9 May 2017 (BR), Gustavus 18 May 2017 (BBP), and Hoonah 22 May 2017 (ACC, photo). The Audubon’s Warbler nests in southern Southeast Alaska, where intergrades are common (Gibson and Withrow 2015); e.g., most Yellow-rumped Warblers nesting in the Ketchikan area are intergrades (Heinl and Piston 2009).

WILSON’S WARBLER: Early arriving Wilson’s Warblers included one at Petersburg 25 April 2017 (ELY), one at Wrangell 29 April 2017 (HW, JG, photo), one near Juneau 30 April 2017 (MWS), and four at Ketchikan 30 April 2017 (SCH). This species typically arrives in early May.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK: A male Black-headed Grosbeak visited a feeder at Kupreanof, Kupreanof Island, 27 May 2017 (BR, JRe; Figure 19). This species is a very rare migrant and summer visitant to Southeast Alaska and has been found nearly annually over the last 20 years.
Figure 18.—Myrtle × Audubon’s warbler intergrades are often easy to identify, as demonstrated by the bird on the left (at Gravina Island 7 May 2017; photo by Jim H. Lewis)—it has the yellow throat of an Audubon’s Warbler; however, the yellow is surrounded by a white border with sharp corners at the sides of the throat that wrap up around the bottom of the auriculurs, and it has a white eyeline and slate gray auriculurs that contrast with the rest of the gray head, all of which are characters of the Myrtle Warbler. Close photos of seemingly pure Southeast Alaska Audubon’s Warblers often reveal characters of the Myrtle Warbler, as shown by the bird on the right (at Ketchikan 19 May 2017; photo by Steven C. Heinl)—it has the white eye arcs and more or less rounded yellow throat of an Audubon’s Warbler, but it also has a narrow white chin, a faint white eyeline in front of and behind the eye, and its auriculurs are a touch darker gray than the rest of the head, all of which—again—are characters of the Myrtle Warbler.

Figure 19.—This male Black-headed Grosbeak visited Kupreanof feeder 27 May 2017. Photo by Jason Regula
**LITERATURE CITED**


