SUMMARY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRD OBSERVATIONS:

Fall: August–November 2018
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This report summarizes bird sightings from Southeast Alaska for the fall season, August–November 2018, 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.

This fall was one of the most exciting in a long time in terms of unusual finds, but it was an extraordinarily fine fall at Sitka, where highlights included Alaska’s 1st LeConte’s Sparrow, Lark Sparrow (4th Alaska record), Brown Booby (4th Southeast Alaska record), Common Nighthawk (2nd documented local record), Gray Catbird (2nd local report), Rustic Bunting (1st local report), and a host of rare Warblers during October–November including Tennessee, Nashville (2nd local report), Magnolia (1st local report), Palm, Black-throated Gray (4th Alaska record), Blackpoll (2nd local report), MacGillivray’s (1st documented local record), and Northern Waterthrush (2nd local report). Highlights elsewhere included a Little Bunting at Juneau (1st Southeast Alaska record), two Tropical Kingbirds (6th and 7th Alaska records), the first Mountain Chickadees to be found in Alaska in 18 years, and unprecedented numbers of Palm Warblers (16), Spotted Towhees (5), and Red Fox Sparrows.

Shorebird migration seemed unusually lackluster judging by the few reports of the rarer species and even some of the regular migrants. No Whimbrels were reported! Juneau and Ketchikan observers also reported lower than average numbers of waterbirds, particularly loons, grebes, some waterfowl, and murre—a situation that continued throughout the winter as well.

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), 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 species of birds known in Alaska (525 species as of 1 January 2019) is compiled and maintained by the Alaska Checklist Committee and available free online at http://www.universityofalaskamuseumbirds.org/products/checklist.pdf. The phylogenetic sequence of orders, families, genera, and species was changed substantially by the American Ornithological Society in 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 and are also reflected in this report.

Names and Initials of observers cited in the text or who reported sightings: Debbie Ackerman (DA), Beverly A. Agler (BAA), Gwen S. Baluss (GSB), R. Brad Benter (RBB), Keith Bruce (KB), Lucas Clark (LC), Amy C. Courtney (ACC), Thomas Courtney (TC), Bonnie H. Demerjian (BHD), Melissa Dougherty (MD), Nat K. Drumheller (NKD), Chris Dunford (CD), Tom Feild (TF), Scott Fischer (SF), Betsy Fischer (BF), Susan Fredericks (SF), C. Elaine Furbish (CEF), Kyle Gage (KG), Connor P. F. Goff (CPFG), Matt R. Goff (MRG), Rowan B. L. Goff (RBLG), Mide Greenfelder (MG), Nicholas R. Hajdukovich (NRH), Steven C. Heinl (SCH), Larry Hooge (LH), Karen Horn (KH), Jim L. Hunt (JLH), Brad L. Hunter (BLH), Karen Johnson (KJ), Moses Johnson (MJ), Geraldine King (GK), Jerrold F. Koerner (JFK), David J. Krause
(DJK), Kitty L. LaBounty (KLL), Laurie A. Lamm (LAL), Aaron J. Lang (AJL), James D. Levison (JDL), Jim H. Lewis (JHL), Ben L. Limle (BLL), Amy Millsaps (AM), Cody Millsaps (CM), J. A. Millsaps (JAM), J Millsaps (JM), Kari Monagle (KM), Paul H. Norwood (PHN), Eric V. Parker (EVP), Cathy M. Parker (CMP), Andrew W. Piston (AWP), Jerry Pruett (JP), Yvonne Ripley (YR), Kim Rivera (KR), Patty A. Rose (PAR), Shelagh Sands (SS), Jeffrey F. Sauer (JFS), Travis Saunders (TS), L. R. Slim Schonert (LRSS), Scott C. Schuette (SCS), Mark W. Schwan (MWS), Barbara Shepherd (BS), Andrew Thoms (AT), Denise Y. Turley (DYT), Gus B. van Vliet (GBV), Victoria Vasburg (VV), Kimberley A. Vicchy (KAV), Brenda Wright (BW), E. L. “Butch” Young (ELY).

SPECIES ACCOUNTS:

SNOW GOOSE: Late Snow Geese included two at Petersburg 12–13 November 2018 (ELY), singles at Gustavus 15 and 23 November 2018 (NKD), six at Ketchikan 17 November 2018 (AWP, SCH), and up to 10 at the Mendenhall Wetlands, near Juneau, through 29 November 2018 (LRSS, PAR, et al.). Most Snow Geese depart the region by late October.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: Late Greater White-fronted Geese included one at the Mendenhall Wetlands 2 November 2018 (PAR, GBV), singles at Ketchikan 10 and 17 November 2018 (AWP, SCH) and up to nine at Klawock through 19 November 2018 (MD, KG). Small numbers also lingered at Petersburg through November, including maximum 14 on 29 November 2018 (ELY, BLH). Migrants move through Southeast Alaska primarily from late August to late September and stragglers are quite rare after October.

CACKLING GOOSE: Cackling Geese (subspecies minima) were observed in larger than average numbers this fall. Maximum was 387 observed flying south over the Craig/Klawock area 25 October 2018 (RBB, SCS), with smaller numbers observed on adjacent dates. Large numbers were also observed on the ground during November including maximum counts of 53 at Sitka 7–12 November 2018 (CPFG, DJK), 93 at Klawock 18 November 2018 (MD), up to 30 at Hoonah through 8 November 2018 (ACC), and 20 at Ketchikan 10 November 2018 (AWP, SCH). Latest was one at Neck Lake, Prince of Wales Island, 22 November 2018 (MD). Very rare Aleutian Cackling Geese (subspecies leucopareia) were amongst the minima observed at both Sitka (MRG) and Craig; maximum nine at Craig 17 November 2018 (MD, photo).

The Cackling Goose is an uncommon fall migrant in Southeast Alaska and is observed less frequently and in smaller numbers during the fall compared to spring—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).

WOOD DUCK: A male Wood Duck made a brief, one-day appearance at Juneau’s Riverside Rotary Park 4 October 2018 (BS, photo); up to five Wood Ducks had been present at that location from early spring through 4 August 2018.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL: Rare in fall, single Blue-winged Teal were reported at the Mendenhall Wetlands 7–9 August 2018 (SCH; CD), Sitka 7 October 2018 and 21 October 2018 (CPFG, MRG, RBLG; photo), and near Hoonah 25 October 2018 (NRH).

EURASIAN WIGEON: Eurasian Wigeon sightings included singles at Craig 24 October 2018 (RBB, SCS), Hoonah 30 October 2018 (ACC, photo), and Gustavus 7–15 November 2018 (NKD), and two at Petersburg 13 November 2018 (ELY). This species is a rare migrant and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska.
CANVASBACK: The Canvasback is a rare migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska. This year’s sightings included a pair at Auke Bay 29 September 2018 (GBV), one at Twin Lakes, Juneau, 15 November 2018+ (GBV photo; PAR, MWS, LAL, ACC, BAA), two at Craig 24 October 2018 (RBB, SCS), two at Hoonah, 25 October 2018 (NRH), and four at Gustavus 27 October 2018, followed by one–two there through 17 November 2018 (NKD).

REDHEAD: The Redhead is also a rare migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska, and a pair at Gustavus 7 October 2018 (NKD, photo) provided the season’s only report.

ROCK PTARMIGAN: Large flocks of Rock Ptarmigan were recorded in the Juneau-area alpine, including a flock of 42 observed flying between two peaks near the Mt. Roberts trail 2 October 2018 and two flocks totaling at least 40 birds observed flying between two ridges at Grandchild Ridge 28 October 2018 (GSB). This species is resident on the Southeast Alaska mainland and Chichagof, Baranof, Admiralty, Revillagigedo (Gibson and Withrow 2015), and Mitkof (Peter Walsh pers. comm.) islands.

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN: Six White-tailed Ptarmigan were found in upper Granite Creek Basin, just below the Mt. Juneau ridge, near Juneau, 26 September 2018 (SF, photo). 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 recent reports right across the border near Hyder).

PIED-BILLED GREBE: A Pied-billed Grebe was observed at Ketchikan 11 September 2018+ (JHL; m.obs.) and at least one was at the Mendenhall Forelands 30 October–22 November 2018 (BLL photo; GSB, PAR, GBV, LRSS, KB). This species is a rare fall migrant and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

WESTERN GREBE: A Western Grebe was observed at Sitka 4 November 2018 (DJK). 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.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Eurasian Collared-Doves are present in just about every community in Southeast Alaska, though numbers have fluctuated widely from year to year and appear to have declined at many locations over the past couple of years. This fall’s largest counts were 35 at Klawock and 25 at Craig, both on 25 October 2018 (RBB, SCS), and 22 at Skagway November 2018+ (DA). Maximum counts elsewhere were up to 10 at Sitka (DYT) and Juneau (m.obs.), and one–five at Hydaburg (RBB, SCS), Thorne Bay (KG), Ketchikan (AWP, SCH), Petersburg (ELY, BLH), Hoonah (ACC), and Gustavus (NKD).

MOURNING DOVE: Mourning Dove sightings included at least four at Ketchikan 22 September–19 October 2018 (JHL, SCH, AWP, BLL, KH; Figure 1), at least one at Craig 24–25 October 2018 (RBB, SCS), and one near the Mendenhall Wetlands 29 September 2018 (SF, BF; Figure 1). This dove is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).
COMMON NIGHTHAWK: Single Common Nighthawks were observed at Hyder 16 August 2018 (TF, GK; good description), Sitka 5 September 2018 (PHN, MRG; Figure 2; 2nd documented local record), and near Juneau 10 September 2018 (GBV). One was also found dead at Ketchikan 18 September 2018 (JLH, photo). This species is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska, primarily along the mainland (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

ANNA’S HUMMINGBIRD: Small numbers of Anna’s Hummingbirds were probably present at most towns in Southeast Alaska. Totals at some communities can be difficult to quantify, because hummingbird feeders are ubiquitous and many or most hummingbirds go unreported by the non-birding public. At least 20 but likely up to 30 were present at Ketchikan, as exemplified by one-day counts of eight birds along the north end of the road system on 20 October 2018 and nine birds along the south end of the road system on 12 November 2018 (SCH, AWP, JFK, BLL, JHL). Elsewhere, at least six were present at Gustavus (NKD), five at Sitka and Juneau (m.obs.), and one–two were at Petersburg (ELY), Hoonah (ACC, NRH), Hydaburg, Klawock, and Craig (RBB, SCS).

Recent analysis of Anna’s Hummingbird populations showed rapid growth in the Pacific Northwest (e.g., at Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, Naniamo) since the 1990s, the result of a shift towards more urban habitats to take advantage of supplemental feeding and ornamental plants (Battey 2018). In addition, studies by Greig et al. (2017) found that Anna’s Hummingbirds have been colonizing colder locations over time, suggesting that they are not merely following warming winter temperatures north, as they were more associated with human-modified habitat in the expanded range than in their historical range (which was thought to be limited to chaparral habitat of northern Baja California and the southern two-thirds of California during the first half of twentieth century; Clark and Russell 2012). Human modification of the environment has provided habitat for Anna’s Hummingbirds in Southeast Alaska that largely does not exist away from towns and cities. Greig et al. (2017) also documented a positive feedback cycle between hummingbirds and humans—people who saw hummingbirds were more likely to hang hummingbird feeders, which in turn increased “carrying capacity” and hummingbird populations increased. I can personally vouch for the fact that there are now many more hummingbird feeders hanging on decks and porches in the Ketchikan area during the late fall and winter, long after Rufous Hummingbirds depart, than there were 30 years ago.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD: Rufous Hummingbirds at Sitka on 3 November 2018 (MRG; Figure 3) and 4 November 2018 (KMP, EVP; Figure 3) were extremely late. This species is an early migrant—most depart the region by the end of August and there are few documented Alaska records as late as November.
Figure 2.–Hatching-year Common Nighthawk beautifully documented at Sitka 5 September 2018. Photo by Matt Goff

Figure 3.–Rufous Hummingbirds at Sitka 3 November 2018 (left; photo by Matt Goff) and 4 November 2018 (right; photo by Eric and Cathy Parker) were extremely late. There are few November records for Alaska.

AMERICAN COOT: It was a typical showing for American Coots, with singles at Cavern Lake, Prince of Wales Island, 14 September 2018 (JP, photo) and Petersburg 6 November 2018+ (ELY, BLH; photos), one–two at Juneau 15–22 November 2018 (BW, GBV, PAR), two at Gustavus 27 October–6 November 2018 (NKD), and up to three at Sitka 3 November 2018+ (m.obs.). This species is a rare migrant and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER: An American Golden-Plover in the alpine near Ketchikan 22 September 2018 (BLL, photo) provided the 1st record for the Ketchikan area. Singles were also observed at Gustavus 4 and 13 September 2018 (NKD), where this species is a regular migrant.
Very unusual were two American Golden-Plovers at Gustavus on the late date of 7 November 2018 (NKD, photo), which likely represent the 1st documented November record for Alaska. Reports of this species at Kodiak 5 November 1981 (three), Craig 8 November 1981 (one), and Gustavus 17 November 1981 (one), though identified at the time as “American Golden-Plovers” (American Birds 36:207), are best treated as unidentified golden-plovers. The American and Pacific golden-plovers were considered the same species until 1993 (AOU 1993) and their relative status prior to that time is uncertain due to the difficulty in separating the two species in the field (Paulson 1993; Patten et al. 2003). Juvenile Pacific Golden-Plovers also tend to migrate later in the fall than American Golden-Plovers (Paulson 1993).

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER: Pacific Golden-Plovers were reported in typical very small numbers at Gustavus on six dates 23 August–31 October 2018 (maximum six on 18 October 2018; NKD). Three at Low Island, near Sitka, 3 September 2018 (DYT, photo) and one at Petersburg 29 September 2018 (BLH, photo) provided the only other reports.

UPLAND SANDPIPER: An Upland Sandpiper was reported in the alpine at Gastineau Peak, near Juneau, 2 September 2018 (SS; fide GBV). One at Freshwater Bay 8–9 September 2018 (ACC, TC; photo) likely represented a 1st Chichagof Island record. This species is a rare fall migrant, and there are very few Southeast Alaska reports away from the northern mainland.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT: The only Hudsonian Godwits reported were three at the Mendenhall Wetlands 12 August 2018 and two there (possibly continuing birds) 19 August 2018 (PAR, BAA). This shorebird is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska, primarily in the northern part of the region.

RUDDY TURNSTONE: Only two Ruddy Turnstones were reported: singles at the Mendenhall Wetlands 7 August 2018 (SCH) and at Ketchikan, where rare and late, 7 October 2017 (SCH, BLL).

RED KNOT: A Red Knot at Gustavus 18–24 October 2018 (NKD, photo) provided the only report. Although this shorebird is a regular spring migrant in Southeast Alaska, it is very rare in the fall.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER: Five Buff-breasted Sandpipers at Gustavus 6 September 2018 (NKD, photo), the 2nd largest local count ever, were followed by two there 13 September 2018 (NKD). This shorebird is a very rare fall migrant; typically, one or two are reported each fall and usually at Gustavus or Juneau.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER: For the 5th consecutive year, a Spotted Sandpiper lingered at Sitka’s Indian River to the end of November 2018 and into the winter (CPFG photo, DJK). This shorebird is very rare in Southeast Alaska after September.

SABINE’S GULL: The Sabine’s Gull occurs primarily well offshore of Southeast Alaska during migration and is rare on inside waters. Singles were found in Glacier Bay 10 and 11 August 2018 and 20 September 2018 (NKD), and another was reported at Kasaan Bay, Prince of Wales Island, 23 October 2018 (RBB, SCS).

RING-BILLED GULL: Ring-billed Gulls made a great showing at Sitka, where singles were observed 24 August, 26 August, and 6 September 2018, and three were found on 7 September 2018 (all juveniles; CPFG, photos). A 2nd-cycle bird at Eagle Beach, near Juneau, 6 August 2018 (SCH, photo) provided the only other sighting away from Ketchikan area, where the species is an uncommon fall migrant (Heinl and Piston 2009).
SLATY-BACKED GULL: Sitka gull aficionados documented at least four Slaty-backed Gulls 25 August–20 November 2018 (CPFG, photos; DJK), including at least three adults and a 3rd-cycle bird. Although Slaty-backed Gulls have been found regularly at Sitka in recent years, this represented one of the best showings ever for a single season and location in Southeast Alaska. An adult was also found at Ketchikan 22–24 October 2018 (SCH, AWP, BLL, JHL; photo). This species is a rare migrant and casual winter visitant along the south coast of Alaska.

CASPIAN TERN: A flock of 21 Caspian Terns at Bartlett Cove 7 August (NKD) was maximum in the Gustavus area, where the largest numbers of this species are typically recorded. Two at Eagle Beach 1 August 2018 (SCH, MWS) and one at Sitka 24 August 2018 (CPFG) provided the only August reports away from the Gustavus area. Very late birds included singles at Sitka 20 September 2018 and 23 September 2018 (CPFG) and one at Gustavus 23 September 2018 (NKD).

BULLER’S SHEARWATER: Twelve Buller’s Shearwaters were observed at the entrance to Cross Sound 18 September 2018 (AJL). This species is a common fall visitant to the Gulf of Alaska (DeCicco et al. 2017).

PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATER: A grounded Pink-footed Shearwater was rescued from a Ketchikan parking lot at around 10:00 p.m. on 14 September 2018 (KAV, SCH; Figure 4). The bird was quite vigorous and immediately flew off when it was released at Clover Passage early the next morning. This species is rare to fairly common in the Gulf of Alaska during fall (DeCicco et al. 2017), but this bird quite possibly represented the 1st record for inside waters in Southeast Alaska.

BROWN BOOBY: A Brown Booby that landed on the salmon troller F/V Cloud Nine in Sitka Sound 2 November 2018 (MJ; fide KJ; Figure 5) provided the 4th Brown Booby record for Southeast Alaska and the 9th for Alaska, all since 2014 (Gibson et al. 2018). The bird rode the vessel into Sitka harbor, where it stayed the night (m.obs.); it rode the boat back out to sea the following morning before departing near Vitskari; it was apparently seen in Sitka Sound again on 8 November (MJ; fide MRG).

OSPREY: An Osprey at Eagle’s Nest Campground, Prince of Wales Island, 7 November 2018 (KG, photo) was extremely late. Most depart Southeast Alaska by early October, and there are probably very few November records for Alaska.

![Figure 4](image-url)–This Pink-footed Shearwater was found in a Ketchikan parking lot the night of 14 September—shown here right before it was released the next morning, 15 September. Photo by Andy Piston
GOLDEN EAGLE: Golden Eagle sightings continued at Sitka following nesting activity there during the summer. Two juveniles were observed 3 September 2018, an adult 19 September 2018, and a juvenile 12 October 2018 (CPFG, photos). Golden Eagles were also reported in the Juneau area, where regular in very small numbers: two adults over the Mt. Juneau ridge 19 August 2018 (GBV) and two young birds at Thunder Mountain trail 16 September 2018 (GSB). The Golden Eagle is a rare winter visitant and rare or uncommon migrant and summer breeder in Southeast Alaska, primarily on the northern mainland. There are scattered reports across the Alexander Archipelago, but there are at least a dozen reports for the Sitka area prior to 2018.

SNOWY OWL: A Snowy Owl was found at Hoonah 15 November 2018 (LC, ACC, TC) and one was reported at Sitka 7–8 November 2018 (fide MRG). This species is an irregular visitant to Southeast Alaska (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959), primarily in late fall.

NORTHERN HAWK OWL: A Northern Hawk Owl found in the alpine near Ketchikan 22 September 2018 (BLL, photo) represented only the 3rd record for Revillagigedo Island. This owl is rare in Southeast Alaska and most reports are from the northern mainland.

BOREAL OWL: A Boreal Owl was reported at Skagway 29 November 2018 (SF), where the species is rare or uncommon (fide CEF). Scattered sightings elsewhere around Southeast Alaska in recent years suggest this species is likely a rare resident (or migrant and winter visitant) in the region but its status is poorly known.

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER: A Black-backed Woodpecker was a nice find on Grandchild ridge, near Juneau, 12 October 2018 (RBB). This interior species is casual or very rare in Southeast Alaska.
OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER: Only four Olive-sided Flycatcher reports seemed like a poor showing. Two were at Hoonah 1 August 2018 another was there 10 August 2018 (ACC), and singles were at Gustavus 23 August 2018 (NKD) and the Mendenhall Wetlands 25 August 2018 (PAR, BAA).

ALDER FLYCATCHER: Two Alder Flycatchers at the Mendenhall Wetlands 10 September 2018 (SF, GBV; photos) were the last reported. This species is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska.

SAY’S PHOEBE: A Say’s Phoebe was observed at the Mendenhall Wetlands 23–25 August 2018 (PAR; SF, BF, GBV, MWS, BAA; Figure 6). This species is a casual migrant in Southeast Alaska.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD: Two Tropical Kingbirds were found this fall. One at the Mendenhall Wetlands 6 October 2018 (PAR, photo, recording; SF, JFS, GSB, GBV; Figure 7) provided the 1st record for the Juneau area. One at Ketchikan 26 October 2018 (BLL, photo) was followed by another there (probably the same bird?) seven miles away 4–12 November 2018 (SCH, BLL, AWP, JHL; Figure 7). Small numbers of hatching-year Tropical Kingbirds regularly disperse north along the Pacific Coast of North America during the fall (Stouffer and Chesser 1998); there are now seven Alaska records, all from Southeast Alaska in October–November.

HORNED LARK: Only two Horned Larks were reported: one in the alpine at Grandchild Ridge, near Juneau, 28 October 2018 (GSB, photo) and one at Gustavus 31 October 2018 (NKD). This species is a rare or locally uncommon migrant in Southeast Alaska, primarily on the mainland.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: What appears to be typical small numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported this fall. They were present all fall at Gustavus, the most consistent location for this species in the recent past; maximum was five there on 6 October 2018 (NKD). Elsewhere, five–six were found in the Juneau area 17 August–17 September 2018 (m.obs.), three in the Ketchikan area 26 August–22 September 2018 (AWP, BLL, et al.), and singles at Skagway 5 September 2018 (CEF) and Petersburg 29 August 2018 (ELY).

Figure 6.–Immature Say’s Phoebe at the Mendenhall Wetlands dike trail 24 August 2018. Photo by Betsy Fisher
Figure 7.—Two Tropical Kingbirds were found in Southeast Alaska this fall: one at Juneau 6 October 2018 (left) provided the 1st local record (photo by Patty Rose) and at least one was found at Ketchikan (right), shown here 6 November 2018 (photo by Steve Heinl).

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE: One of the surprises of the season was the discovery of Mountain Chickadees in subalpine habitat on Grandchild Ridge, near Juneau, the first to be reported in Alaska in 18 years. At least two were observed 9 October 2018 (GSB; Figure 8), two flocks totaling at least 20 were found on 12 October 2018 (RBB; Figure 8), and up to seven were found on 15 October (JDL, photo).

Kessel and Gibson (1978) described the Mountain Chickadee as a casual, perhaps rare, winter visitant near sea level on the southeastern Alaska mainland, based on four reports in the Juneau area from the late 1960s to mid-1970s. There are only seven reports since that time, including something of an incursion in 1989 (three at the Taku River 18 October; singles at Mitkof Island 30 September and 8 October; three at Juneau November+). One at Juneau 14 October 2001 represented the only other report since 1989. All fall–winter reports have come from the Juneau area, with the exception of the Taku River and Mitkof Island birds mentioned above. Kessel and Gibson (1978) also considered this species a casual summer visitant and possible breeder in the Coast Range, based on a male in Warm Pass Valley, 23 km north of Skagway, 6 August 1974; however, none have subsequently been reported in that area.

The Mountain Chickadee is widespread in montane and plateau areas of central-southern British Columbia east of the Coast Mountains, but it is rather more sparsely distributed in northern montane regions of the province (Wright 2015) and is a resident, localized breeder in southern Yukon, at the northern edge of its range (Sinclair et al. 2003). Although this species is largely considered resident, some populations stage irregular, food-driven, irruptive migratory movements from montane breeding areas to surrounding lowland areas (McCallum et al. 1999, Marshall et al. 2003).

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD: A Mountain Bluebird was a nice find at Gustavus 30 November 2018 (NKD, photo). 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.

GRAY CATBIRD: A Gray Catbird at Sitka 7 September 2018 (KJ, photo) provided the 2nd local record. There are now about a dozen reports for Southeast Alaska, most of which are from the summer.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: Very small numbers of Bohemian Waxwings were reported; maximum was 14 at Skagway 18 November 2018 (CEF).
COMMON REDPOLL: Common Redpolls were reported in small numbers and only at Juneau, Gustavus, and Hoonah. Maximum was 30 at Juneau 20 November 2018 (PAR).

RED CROSSBILL: Both species of crossbills continued to be present in very low numbers in Southeast Alaska. There were only nine reports of Red Crossbills scattered across the region, all of one–two birds (m.obs.). White-winged Crossbills were reported more frequently, but also in small numbers—maximum counts were in late October and November: 40 at Klawock 19 November (KG), 20 at Hoonah 29 October 2018 (ACC, NRH), and 20 at Juneau 10 November 2018 (GBV).

PINE SISKIN: Very small numbers of Pine Siskins were reported throughout the region. Maximum was 100 at Ketchikan 7 October 2018 (BLL, SCH); however, most sightings, by far, were in the single digits, and siskins all but disappeared from many areas by the end of the season.

LAPLAND LONGSPUR: A maximum 500 Lapland Longspurs at Gustavus 13 September 2018, including a single flock of 300 (NKD), was among the largest counts ever for this species in Southeast Alaska.

LITTLE BUNTING: Among the many lost birds that turned up in Southeast Alaska this fall, one of the most surprising was a Little Bunting at the Mendenhall Wetlands dike trail 7 September 2018 (PAR; Figure 9). This Eurasian species is a rare fall migrant to St. Lawrence Island (Lehman 2005) and is casual in fall elsewhere in the Bering Sea and western Aleutian Islands (Gibson and Withrow 2015). The Juneau sighting represents the first report for the Alaska mainland, though there are at least eight records for western North America south of Alaska.

RUSTIC BUNTING: A Rustic Bunting at a Sitka feeder 3 November 2018+ (EVP, CMP; Figure 9; m.obs.) provided the 1st local and 10th Southeast Alaska record, all of which are from fall–winter. This Eurasian species is found regularly in Alaska only in the western Aleutian Islands in spring (Gibson and Byrd 2007); it occurs casually elsewhere in Alaska, primarily at other Bering Sea islands.
Figure 9.—Granted, this iPhone photo of a Little Bunting at the Mendenhall Wetlands dike trail 7 September 2018 (left; photo by Patty Rose) is somewhat impressionistic, but it shows the rufous head and thick black crown stripes distinctive of this species; it was observed at very close range and well-described, and represents the first report for both Southeast Alaska and the Alaska mainland. A Rustic Bunting at Sitka (right; shown here 11 January 2019) provided the 1st local record and the 10th record for Southeast Alaska (photo by Eric Parker).

SPOTTED TOWHEE: Five (!) Spotted Towhees were found this fall, most of which lingered into the winter. Two turned up at Ketchikan: one 11 November 2018+ (AWP; photo) and another 10 December 2018+ (YR, photo). One at Mendenhall Valley 22 November 2018 (KM; Figure 10) was followed by another at Auke Bay 27 November 2018+ (PAR: Figure 10; m.obs.). Finally, one at Gustavus 19 November 2018+ (NKD; Figure 10) provided the 1st local record. There are now more than 20 Alaska records of this species, which breeds as close as southern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

CHIPPING SPARROW: The Chipping Sparrow is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska. Sightings included one at Ketchikan 18 October 2018 (SCH, AWP, JHL photo), up to two at a Mendenhall feeder 5–8 September 2018 (JM, JAM, AM, LRSS, CM; photos), and one at the Mendenhall Wetlands 10–13 September 2018 (GBV, PAR; photos).

Figure 10.—Five Spotted Towhees were found in Southeast Alaska this fall, including these individuals at Gustavus 19 November 2018 (left; photo by Nat Drumheller), Juneau 22 November 2018 (center; photo by Kari Monagle), and Juneau 30 November 2018 (right; photo by Patty Rose).
LARK SPARROW: Among the exciting finds at Sitka this fall was a Lark Sparrow 9 August 2018 (AT; Figure 11; m.obs.). There are only three prior Alaska reports, one of which was also found at Sitka (15 August 1999; North American Birds 54:92). This sparrow breeds north to southeastern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

LECONTE’S SPARROW: Vying for the most exciting find of the fall was a LeConte’s Sparrow at Sitka 13 October 2018 (CPFG; Figure 12), which provided the 1st Alaska record. This small sparrow nests as close as northeastern British Columbia (Phinney 2015), extreme southeastern Yukon (Sinclair et al. 2003), and southwestern and south-central Mackenzie (Lowther 2005).

Figure 11.—This Lark Sparrow at Sitka was only the 4th to be found in Alaska. Photo by Matt Goff

Figure 12.—Among the many remarkable finds this fall was this LeConte’s Sparrow photographed at Sitka 13 October 2018, the first ever to be reported in Alaska. Photo by Connor Goff
FOX SPARROW: Unprecedented numbers of Red Fox Sparrows (subspecies *zaboria*) were reported in the Juneau area, where a minimum 15 were observed 7–28 September 2018 (m.obs.), including three at an Auke Bay feeder 11–12 September 2018 (GBV, photo), four at a Mendenhall Valley feeder 15–16 September 2018 (GSB, photo), and four at Brotherhood Bridge trail 18 September 2018 (AJL). This interior Taiga breeder is a rare, annual fall and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska, but is found more frequently (and earlier) in northern Southeast. Singles at Gustavus 14 September–1 October 2018 (NKD, photo) and Ketchikan in November 2018 (JHL) were the only others reported.

SWAMP SPARROW: Swamp Sparrows were widely reported this fall. Three at Ketchikan 18 October–30 November 2018+ (SCH, AWP; photo) was above average for that location. Elsewhere, at least three were located at Sitka 18 November 2018+ (CPFG, photo, MRG, KLL), and singles were found at Craig 24 October 2018 (RBB, SCS), the Mendenhall Wetlands 31 October–2 November 2018 (GBV, GSB, PAR, MWS), Bartlett Cove 5–17 November 2018 (NKD), and Neka Bay, Chichagof Island 30 November 2018 (NRH, photo). This species is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: At least seven White-throated Sparrows were found at both Ketchikan 12 September 2018+ (m.obs.; photos) and the Juneau area 10 September 2018+ (GBV, GSB; photos), including two together well away from town at the Sheep Creek trail 21 September 2018 (GSB). Elsewhere, at least six were found at Sitka 21 September 2018+ (m.obs.; photos), three at Gustavus 30 September 2018+ (NKD, photos), and one at Craig 24 October 2018 (RBB, SCS). This species is a rare fall migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska.

HARRIS’S SPARROW: An immature Harris’s Sparrow was a nice find at Ketchikan 6 November 2018+ (JFK, photo). This species is a very rare or casual migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD: The Brown-headed Cowbird is a rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska, and this fall’s showing was pretty typical. Sightings included one at Shakes Slough meadow 26 August 2018 (BLH), one at Wrangell 31 August 2018 (SCS), three juveniles at Sitka 5 September 2018 and a juvenile there 9 September 2018 (CPFG, photo), one at Ketchikan 2 August 2018 (AWP), one at Tenakee Springs, 6 September 2018 (KR), a juvenile at Juneau 5 August 2018 (MG, photo), and a juvenile at the Mendenhall Wetlands 18 August 2018 (BAA, PAR; photo).

COMMON GRACKLE: A Common Grackle observed in flight at the Mendenhall Wetlands 2 November 2018 (MWS) could not be relocated. There are about 12 prior Alaska records of this species, which nests as close as northeastern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

OVENBIRD: Another tantalizing report was of an Ovenbird at Skagway 24 August 2018 (LH). There are about 10 Alaska reports, but only one from Southeast Alaska—a well-described bird at Juneau 3 June 1997 (Paul M. Suchanek; *Field Notes 51*:1039).

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH: A Northern Waterthrush at Gustavus 22 August 2018 (NKD) provided only the 4th local record, and one at Sitka 18 September 2018 (KLL) provided the 3rd local record. This species is a locally uncommon breeder along the Southeast Alaska mainland (not including Glacier Bay) and a casual migrant elsewhere in the region.

TENNESSEE WARBLER: Single Tennessee Warblers were found at the Mendenhall Valley 16 September 2018 (AJL, photo) and Sitka 4–16 November 2018 (DJK, et al.; Figures 13 and 14). This species is a rare spring migrant and local breeder on the mainland (Kessel and Gibson 1978) and a casual fall migrant throughout Southeast.
NASHVILLE WARBLER: Single Nashville Warblers at Ketchikan 1 November 2018 (SCH; Figure 13) and Sitka 15–16 November 2018 (DJK, photo, MRG, photo; m.obs.; Figure 14) represented only the 7th and 8th records for Southeast Alaska. There are now at least 15 records for Alaska, all from fall.

Figure 13.–Tennessee Warbler at Sitka 16 November 2018 (left; photo by David Krause) and Nashville Warbler at Ketchikan 2 November 2018 (right; photo by Steve Heinl).

Figure 14.–Nashville and Tennessee warblers together at Sitka 15 November 2018 (left; photo by David Krause) and MacGillivray’s Warbler at Sitka 21 October 2018 (right; 1st documented Sitka record; Photo by Matt Goff).

MACGILLIVRAY’S WARBLER: An extremely late MacGillivray’s Warbler at Sitka 21 October 2018 (MRG, CPFG, et al.; Figure 14) provided the 1st documented local record. Although this species can be common along the larger mainland rivers in Southeast Alaska it is rare away from those areas.

AMERICAN REDSTART: Interesting American Redstart sightings included one at Gustavus 26 August 2018, which provided the 6th local record (NKD), and a latish bird at the Mendenhall Wetlands 24–27 September 2018 (PAR, photo).

MAGNOLIA WARBLER: Among the great warbler finds at Sitka this fall was a Magnolia Warbler 31 October 2018 (MRG; Figure 15), which provided the 1st local record. The bird was captured by a Northern Pygmy-Owl about 30 minutes after it was first sighted! (Figure 15). This species is a casual fall migrant in Southeast Alaska; it nests in adjacent central and northeastern British Columbia.
(Campbell et al. 2001) and is an irregular, rare migrant and breeder in river corridors on the Southeast Alaska mainland.

![Magnolia Warbler](https://www.sitkanature.org)

Figure 15.—This Magnolia Warbler at Sitka 31 October 2018 was taken by a Northern Pygmy-Owl later the same day. Photos by Matt Goff

YELLOW WARBLER: Single Yellow Warblers at Ketchikan 4 November 2018 and 6 November 2018 (SCH, BLL; photo) and Sitka 10 November 2018 (DJK) were very late.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER: Single Blackpoll Warblers were found at the Mendenhall Valley 16 September 2018 (AJL) and Sitka 10 October 2018 (CPFG, photo). The latter provided at least the 2nd local report. This species is a sparse probable breeder on the mainland (Kessel and Gibson 1978, Johnson et al. 2008) and a casual fall migrant elsewhere in Southeast Alaska.

PALM WARBLER: An unprecedented 16 Palm Warblers were found in Southeast Alaska this fall (Figure 16): four or five at Gustavus 2 October–11 November 2018 (NKD, photo), four in the Juneau area 27 October–26 November 2018 (PAR, GSB, MWS, GBV, SF, KM; photo), at least three at Sitka 1–30 November 2018 (MRG, CPFG, Karen Johnson, DJK), three at Ketchikan 13 October–18 November 2018 (SCH, BLL, AWP, photo), and singles at Craig 25 October 2018 (RBB, SCS) and Wrangell 10 November 2018 (TS, photo).

The Palm Warbler is a casual or very rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska; less than two per year have been reported over the past 10 years, and it has not been reported annually (range: 0–8 reports). It nests as close as southeastern Yukon and northeastern British Columbia and is “among the most numerous ‘eastern’ warblers” found during fall migration along the West Coast of North America (Dunn and Garrett 1997).
Figure 16.—At least 16 Palm Warblers were reported in Southeast Alaska this fall, including these individuals at Ketchikan 13 October 2018 (left; photo by Steve Heinl), Juneau 28 October 2018 (center; photo by Mark Schwan), and Sitka 31 October 2018 (left; photo by Matt Goff).

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER: Single Black-throated Gray Warblers were observed at Ketchikan 18 October and 6 November 2018 (probably the same bird; AWP, SCH, BLL; Figure 17) and Sitka 31 October–5 November 2018 (MRG, DJK; m.obs.; Figure 17). This warbler nests north to southwestern British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001). A male at Mitkof Island 5 July 1989 (American Birds 43:1357) and at least two at Hyder June–July 2016 are the only other Alaska reports of this very distinctive warbler.

WILSON’S WARBLER: Very late Wilson’s Warblers included singles at Ketchikan 18–25 November 2018 (AWP), Sitka 8–27 November 2018 (m.obs.), and the Mendenhall Wetlands through 27 November 2018 (GBV, m.obs.).

WESTERN TANAGER: A male Western Tanager at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 2 November 2018 (GBV; Figure 18) represented the season’s only report and among the latest Alaska reports.

Figure 17.—Black-throated Gray Warblers at Sitka 5 November 2018 (left; photo by Matt Goff) and Ketchikan 6 November 2018 (right; photo by Steve Heinl).
Figure 18.—Male Western Tanager at Auke Bay, near Juneau, 2 November 2018. *Photo by Gus van Vliet*

**LITERATURE CITED**


LITERATURE CITED (continued)


