SUMMARY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRD OBSERVATIONS:  
Spring: March–May 2018  
Steven C. Heinl, 2603 4th Avenue, Ketchikan, AK 99901

This report summarizes bird sightings from Southeast Alaska for the spring season, March–May 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). These observations include 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.

Arrival of migrant songbirds appeared more or less on time, with the usual scattering of earlier than normal individuals, some of which set new local arrival dates. April and May were wetter than normal and at times cooler as well. Persistent wet weather in southern Southeast Alaska during the last half of April resulted in one of the largest fallouts of migrants in the Ketchikan area in many years—American Robins, Varied Thrushes, and, especially, Fox and Golden-crowned sparrows were abundant; even Wilson’s Snipe were noticeably common. Perhaps related, was an unusually large number of Rufous Hummingbirds observed feeding on willow blooms along the Stikine River at the end of April, as well as several reports of large numbers of Violet-green Swallows. Some insectivores were reported in very low numbers (e.g., Vaux’s Swift, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee), and our latest arriving songbirds, the Alder Flycatcher and Cedar Waxwing, were not reported until June (as is often the case). Unusual sightings this spring included Black Tern, Eastern Phoebe, and Purple Martin—all 4th Southeast Alaska records—Ross’s Goose, three King Eiders, Franklin’s Gull, and Western Meadowlark.

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)—the vast majority of 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. 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 (currently up to 521 species) is compiled and maintained by the Alaska Checklist Committee and available free online at http://www.universityofalaskamuseum.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: Beverly A. Agler (BAA), Erika Bahrt (EB), Gwen S. Baluss (GSB), Lynn E. Barber (LEB), Pam Bealer (PB), Andrew Beierly (AB), Zachary Brown (ZB), Adrian Burke (Abu), Kim Burnham (KB), Kaylauna L. Churchill (KLC), Amy C. Courtney (ACC), Matthew Danihel (MD), Pete Deane (PD), Bonnie H. Demerjian (BHD), Tasha J. DiMarzio (TJD), Boris Dobrowolsky (BD), John Doty (JD), Nat K. Drumheller (NKD), Cameron D. Eckert (CDE), Scott Fischer (SF), Nicole Filipik (NF), C. Elaine Furbish (CEF), Connor P. F. Goff (CPFG), Matt R. Goff (MRG), Bob Grant (BG), Vera Goudima (VG), Sudie Hargis (SH), Lisa Sadleir-hart (LSH), William R. Heard (WRH), Steven C. Heinl (SCH), Katherine Holmlund (KH), Elizabeth Hooge (EH), Patricia L. Hunt (PLH), Brad L. Hunter (BLH), Paul Hutto (PH), Renald Jauvin (RJ), Stefanie Jenkinson (SJ), Jerrold F. Koerner (JFK), Mike G. Konsler (MGK), David J. Krause (DJK), Bess
Kull (BK), Kitty L. LaBounty (KLL), Laurie A. Lamm (LAL), Jack Lee (JL), Paul E. Lehman (PEL), Hank P. Lentfer (HPL), Jim H. Lewis (JHL), Ben L. Limle (BL), Anya Maier (AM), Ceri Malein (CM), Debbie Maas (DM), Mary J. McCafferty (MIM), John McDermott (JM), Lorna McDermott (LM), Amy Millsaps (AM), Pat Mulligan (PM), Sean L. Neilson (SLN), Jake Ohlson (JO), Bruce B. Paige (BBP), Kassie Pesch (KP), Lucy Pizzuto-Philips (LPP), Andrew W. Piston (AWP), Ardath Piston (AP), Kathy M. Ripley (KMR), Patty A. Rose (PAR), Deborah D. Rudis (DDR), William T. Sampson (WTS), L. R. Slim Schonert (LRSS), Mark W. Schwan (MWS), Stanley Senner (SS), Barbara Shepherd (BS), Pamela H. Sinclair (PHS), Melanie Smith (MS), Amber Stephens (AS), James Michael Studley (JMS), Chuck P. Susie (CPS), Daniel Svetlak (DS), Rick Taylor (RT), Andrew Thoms (AT), Denise Y. Turley (DYT), Sadie E. G. Ulman (SEGU), Gus B. van Vliet (GBV), Victoria Vosburg (VV), Jesse Vigliotti (JV), Nils Warnock (NW), Caleb Warren (CW), Terry Wells (TW), Brenda Wright (BW), E. L. “Butch” Young (ELY).

SPECIES ACCOUNTS:

SNOW GOOSE: A wintering Snow Goose at the Mendenhall Wetlands, near Juneau, was last observed 11 March 2018 (PAR). Observations of Snow Geese at the mouth of the Stikine River, the primary migration stopover site for this species in Southeast Alaska (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959), included estimates of 5,000 on 14 April 2018 (Gut Island and Little Dry islands; VG; Figure 1), 1,700 on 21 April 2018 (Little Dry and Sergief islands; BLH), 1,500 on 30 April 2018 (WTS), and 1,100 on 5 May 2018 (BLH). Gustavus and Juneau birders recorded larger than average numbers 9 April–27 May 2018, including many sightings of 100+ birds: maximum at Juneau was 167 on 6 May 2018 (PAR), and high counts at Gustavus were 400 on 29 April 2018 (NKD) and 2 May 2018 (KLC, CW) and 600 on 20 April 2018 (NKD). Perhaps related, Snow Geese were observed at Skagway 5–12 May 2018, where normally rare (maximum, 22 on 6 May CEF; JMc, MGK, BD).

A blue-morph Snow Goose in Glacier Bay 9 May 2018 (NKD; Figure 2) was very unusual and represented perhaps only the second report of this color morph in Southeast Alaska (prior report of two at the Stikine River mouth 27 April–4 May 1992; American Birds 46:463). The blue-morph is distributed primarily in midcontinent populations of the Snow Goose and is “extremely rare” in the British Columbia and Washington wintering and staging populations that migrate through Southeast Alaska in spring and fall (Mowbray et al. 2000).

ROSS’S GOOSE: An adult Ross’s Goose at Echo Cove, Juneau, 11 May 2018 (LAL; Figure 3) provided about the 9th record for Southeast Alaska, all of which are from spring. This goose is a casual visitor along the southern and northern coasts of Alaska (Gibson and Withrow 2015), and it has nested on the eastern Beaufort Sea coast (Johnson and Troy 1987).

CACKLING GOOSE: A Cackling Goose, likely subspecies minima, at Gustavus 30 March–1 April 2018 (NKD) provided the earliest local arrival date by seven days, and was well ahead of this species’ normal mid-April–mid-May migration window. Five Aleutian Cackling Geese (subspecies leucopareia) at Echo Cove, near Juneau, 11 May 2018 (LAL; Figure 3) were also unusual; this subspecies is a casual or very rare migrant in Southeast Alaska. A northbound flight of hundreds of Cackling Geese (with smaller number of Greater White-fronted Geese and Brant) was observed from the cruise ship Emerald Princess off the west coast of Chichagof Island 4 May 2018 (PEL). In spring, Cackling and Greater White-fronted geese migrate north through Southeast Alaska to coastal South-central Alaska on their way to nesting areas to the west (Ely and Dzubin 1994, Mowbray et al. 2002); at least some portion of these birds fly over the Gulf of Alaska as indicated by observations at isolated Middleton Island (DeCicco et al. 2017).
Figure 1.–Snow Geese at the mouth of the Stikine River (in flight and on the ground at the right), part of an estimated 5,000 that were present 14 April 2018. *Photo by Vera Goudima*

Figure 2.–Blue-morph Snow Goose (left center; dark gray bird with white head) in Glacier Bay 9 May 2018. *Photo by Nat K. Drumheller*

**TUNDRA SWAN:** Total observations of Tundra Swans were two flyovers (heard calling) at Gustavus 28 April 2018 (NKD) and one at Hoonah 9 May 2018 (ACC).

**WOOD DUCK:** Wood Ducks appeared at Juneau’s Riverside Rotary Park for the 3rd consecutive spring, beginning with a pair 9 April 2018 (BS). Three were present 20 April 2018 (two males, one female), and multiple birds were observed through the end of the period (m.obs.); maximum at one time was four males and two females 28 April 2018 (BS).
BLUE-WINGED TEAL: Blue-winged Teal were reported in typical small numbers throughout the region beginning with one at Hoohnah 5 May 2018 (ACC). Exceptions were 10 at Sitka 11 May 2018 (AT) and 20 at the Mendenhall Wetlands 27 May 2018 (GBV). This species typically occurs in Southeast Alaska in pairs or groups of up to eight birds (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

EURASIAN WIGEON: Wintering Eurasian Wigeon were last observed at Juneau 11 March 2018 (PAR) and Sitka 29 March 2018 (CPFG). Migrants were reported in typical very small numbers 4 April–19 May 2018 (Sitka, Haines, Skagway, Ketchikan, Gustavus, Juneau); maximum was three at Gustavus 29 April 2018 (NKD).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL: A Eurasian Green-winged Teal (subspecies crecca) was picked out of the teal at Gustavus on 29 April 2018 (NKD). This subspecies nests in the Aleutian Islands (Gibson and Byrd 2007) and is a rare, regular migrant and winter visitant along the eastern Pacific Coast (Campbell et al. 1990a, Marshall et al. 2003).

CANVASBACK: The usual few Canvasbacks were reported: one at Sitka 8–31 May 2018 (NF; m.obs.; Figure 4), one at Skagway 29 April 2018 (RJ), singles at the Mendenhall Wetlands 7 April 2018 (BS, photo) and 16 May 2018 (LAL). This species is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska.

REDHEAD: The usual few Redheads were also reported: pair at Sitka 29–31 May 2018 (MRG, DYT, DS; Figure 4), one at Hoohnah 15–22 May 2018 (1st local record; ACC, photo; KP), one at Gustavus 21 May 2018 (BBP), and two–four reported on three dates in the Juneau area 6 April–10 May 2018 (LAL, JFS, BAA, JD, MWS). This species is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska.

KING EIDER: Several King Eiders were found in the Gustavus/Glacier Bay area this spring: an adult male at Gustavus 14 March 2018, an immature male at Gustavus 21 April 2018 (likely the same bird that was observed there in February 2018), and another immature male in Glacier Bay 19 May 2018 (NKD). This species is casual or very rare east of Kodiak Island—there are more than 25 Southeast Alaska reports, nearly all in winter and spring, and most are from the Juneau and Gustavus areas.

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN: Three White-tailed Ptarmigan at Lower Taku meadows, Taku Inlet, 19 March 2018 (DM) provided a reminder that 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. 1990b; and also reports right across the border near Hyder).
Figure 4.–The Canvasback and Redhead are rare enough in Southeast Alaska that seeing one of each at the same time is a special treat. These two drakes were photographed at Sitka 29 May 2018. Photo by Matt R. Goff

PIED-BILLED GREBE: Two Pied-billed Grebes at Wrangell 30 May 2018 (BHD) provided a very rare spring sighting for this species, which is primarily a rare fall migrant and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska.

BAND-TAILED PIGEON: A Band-tailed Pigeon at Ketchikan 15 March 2018 (KMR; Figure 5) provided a new early arrival date for Alaska by five days. Six at a different Ketchikan feeder 31 March 2018 (JFK) represented a more typical arrival date, and one at Wrangell 23 April 2018 (BHD) was at the northern edge of this species’ regular range in Alaska (and North America).

Figure 5.–A Band-tailed Pigeon at Ketchikan 15 March 2018 (left) established a new early arrival date for Alaska. A Mourning Dove at the same feeder 26 April 2018 (right) was very rare in spring. Photos by Kathy M. Ripley
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Numbers of Eurasian Collared-Doves appear to be greatly reduced from just a few years ago. A few could be found at Ketchikan most of the spring, then nine showed up at a Ketchikan feeder 20 May 2018 and increased to 20 by 27 May 2018 (JFK). Two arrived at Gustavus 31 May 2018 (JO), where none had been seen since mid-January (NKD). Up to six were present in the Juneau area (m.obs.), and up to five at Hoonah during March had dwindled to one by the end of May (ACC). Other sightings included three at Skagway 21 April 2018 (CDE, PHS) and one or two there through May (BBP, RT, JV), one–three all spring at Petersburg (ELY), and singles at Sitka through 22 April 2018 (DYT, CPFG) and Wrangell 16 April 2018 (KLC, CW). Of note was a collared-dove off the beaten-track in Endicott Arm 23 May 2018 (BK).

MOURNING DOVE: A Mourning Dove at Ketchikan 26–29 April 2018 (KMR; Figure 5) was unusual. Although this dove is a regular, rare fall migrant in Southeast Alaska, it is very rare (and not recorded annually) in spring and summer (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

VAUX’S SWIFT: Interesting Vaux’s Swift reports included very early sightings on 30 April 2018 at both Ketchikan (two; new local early arrival date; SCH photo) and Juneau (one; tied local early arrival date; SEGU, TJD, AS, GBV; photo). Two at Sitka 19 May 2018 (DJK, CPS; Figure 6) and 23 May 2018 (CPFG) added to the growing number of records at that location. This species occurs regularly on the mainland and inner Alexander Archipelago north to Glacier Bay and Lynn Canal; recent observations at Sitka, however, suggest it may occur more regularly along the outer coast than previously thought. High counts this spring were 20 at Hoonah 14 May 2018 (ACC), followed there by 50 on 21 May 2018 (KP) and 70 on 23 May 2018 (ACC). Vaux’s Swifts were otherwise reported in single digits.

Figure 6.—Vaux’s Swift near Sitka 19 May 2018. Photo by Chuck P. Susie

ANNA’S HUMMINGBIRD: A male Rufous × Anna’s hummingbird displayed on territory near Juneau for the 4th consecutive spring, beginning 10 April 2018 (MJM). The bird’s arrival date, about a week earlier than last year, was carefully established through daily observations at the site (MJM). Three or four Anna’s Hummingbirds successfully overwintered in the Juneau area (fide GBV). A male also successfully overwintered at Gustavus, the first to do so, and was last reported 15 March 2018 (EH, NKD). Four or five were present all spring at Sitka (MRG, DYT, LSH). At least 10 were present all spring at Ketchikan.

Certainly, the most interesting Anna’s Hummingbird report was of a female observed collecting nesting material at Ketchikan (AP, AWP). The nest material was dog fur that the Pistons put in a
wire basket on their deck. A female Anna’s Hummingbird that had visited their hummingbird feeders all winter was joined by a male on 24 February; the female was observed collecting the fur almost daily 23–30 March 2018 and again on 7 April 2018, presumably to build a nest. Unfortunately, she flew too far to follow easily, the nest was not found, and no young birds ever appeared at the hummingbird feeders. There is still no documented nesting record for Alaska, but these observations are the closest yet.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD: First arriving Rufous Hummingbirds were noted 30 March 2018 at Ketchikan (exactly average arrival date; AWP), 9 April 2018 at Port Alexander (Debra LeMay), 10 April 2018 at Wrangell (KLC), 11 April at Pelican (PB), 12 April 2018 at Sitka (CM), 13 April 2018 at Juneau (LAL), 14 April 2018 at Hoonah (ACC), 20 April 2018 at Gustavus (NKD), and 21 April 2018 at Skagway (PD). The first sighting of the spring at Auke Bay, where first arrival dates have been documented at the same feeder nearly annually since 1992, was 15 April 2018, about six days later than average (GBV). An estimated 200 were observed feeding in willow blooms along the Stikine River 29 April 2018 (WTS).

Most interesting was a green-backed male Selasphorus hummingbird at Auke Bay 21 April 2018 (GBV). Male Allen’s Hummingbirds (Selasphorus sasin), a closely-related species that nests along the California coast north to southwestern Oregon, differ from male Rufous in having an entirely green back, a different display flight, narrower outer tail feathers, and an emarginated tip on the 2nd tail feather. The amount of green back feathering on male Rufous Hummingbirds is highly variable, however, and up to 1–2% of males have entirely green backs that are identical to Allen’s Hummingbird (Howell 2002). McKenzie and Robbins (1999) and Howell (2002) cautioned that green-backed male Rufous/Allen’s hummingbirds observed outside the range of Allen’s should not be identified to species unless the shape of specific tail feathers can be determined from close-up photos or, preferably, in-hand examination. Indeed, a green-backed adult male Selasphorus at Haines in June–July 1990 turned out to be a Rufous Hummingbird upon close examination (American Birds 44:1171).

AMERICAN COOT: An American Coot, presumably a wintering bird, at Petersburg 17 March 2018 (ELY) provided the only report.

SANDHILL CRANE: An estimated 4,415 Sandhill Cranes were observed from Mitkof Island as the birds flew north from the Stikine River mouth during a 4-hour period 21 April 2018 (BLH). The Stikine River Delta and Gustavus are the main Southeast Alaska migration stopover sites for Pacific Flyway Sandhill Cranes (Petralia and Roth 2005). In spring, those birds fly north through central British Columbia before crossing into Southeast Alaska (Campbell et al. 1990b) and staging (or flying over) the Stikine River Delta.

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER: Reports of Pacific Golden-Plovers were on the low side. They were observed at Gustavus 29 April–13 May 2018 (maximum six, 8 May 2018, NKD, SLN), and singles were reported at Juneau 30 April 2018 (SEGU, AS, TJD, GBV), Sitka 29–30 April 2018 (MRG, CPFG), and Skagway 12 May 2018 (CEF, MGK).

HUDSONIAN GODWIT: Typical small numbers of Hudsonian Godwits were reported at Gustavus 2–22 May 2018 (maximum eight, 2 May 2018, NKD) and in the Juneau area 3–11 May 2018 (including eight at Eagle Beach 3 May 2018, GBV, and 11 at Mendenhall Peninsula trail 5 May 2018, LAL, GSB, LRSS, SF). Singles were also observed at Haines 4 May 2018 (MD), Sitka 6 May 2018 (MRG photo, CPFG), and Skagway 6 May 2018 (AB, photo). This godwit is a regular migrant in small numbers in northern Southeast Alaska.
MARBLED GODWIT: Marbled Godwits were observed on many dates at Gustavus 21 April–13 May 2018; 10 there on 8 May 2018 provided the 2nd highest local count ever (NKD, SLN). Marbled Godwits were also observed on many dates in the Sitka area 26 April–7 May 2018, including a flock of 55 at Low Island 29 April 2018 (MRG, KLL; Figure 7) that was possibly the largest number ever recorded in Southeast Alaska. Singles were also observed at Cross Sound 26 April 2018 (ZB), the Mendenhall Wetlands 28 April 2018 (MWS), and Haines 3–4 May 2018 (MD).

Figure 7.–Twenty-seven of 55 Marbled Godwits, along with Red Knots, Dunlin, and dowitchers at Low Island, near Sitka, 29 April 2018. *Photo by Matt R. Goff*

RUDDY TURNSTONE: Not many Ruddy Turnstones were reported this spring. In the Juneau area, one was observed at the Mendenhall Wetlands 5 May 2018 (LAL, GSB, LRSS), six at Auke Bay 10 May 2018 (WRH), and up to eight at Eagle Beach 19–23 May 2018 (JD, GSB, GBV, SF, MWS). Elsewhere, three were found at Hoonah 5 May 2018 (ACC) and up to six were observed at Gustavus 7–20 May 2018 (NKD, BBP, KLC, CW, SLN).

RED KNOT: Red Knots were reported 27 April–20 May 2018 (m.obs). Exceptional counts of 29 at Gustavus 13 May 2018 and 34 there 20 May 2018 (NKD) were among the largest counts ever for Southeast Alaska. Small numbers were also recorded in the Sitka area (maximum 10 at Low Island 29 April 2018; KLL, MRG) and the Juneau area (m.obs.), including a bird at Eagle Beach 19–20 May 2018 (GSB, BAA, GBV) that had been banded the same week at Grays Harbor, Washington (*fide GBV*).

SANDERLING: Thirty Sanderlings at Skagway 6 May 2018 (CEF, MGK) was a very large number away from the Gustavus area, where high counts included 100 on 1 April 2018 (NKD), 150 on 29 April 2018 (NKD), 110 on 2 May 2018 (NKD), and 65 on 25 May 2018 (BBP). One at Sitka 28 April 2018 (SS, MS, CPFG) and two at Eagle Beach, near Juneau, 19 and 26 May 2018 (JD, PAR, BAA, SF, MWS, BW) provided the only other reports.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER: A Pectoral Sandpiper at the Mendenhall Wetlands 28 April 2018 (PAR photo, GBV) was early, and an estimated 400 there on 13 May 2018 (MWS) was well above average for that location.
WILSON’S SNIPE: A conservative 115 Wilson’s Snipe kicked up along the Ketchikan airport perimeter 21 April 2018 (SCH, AWP, BLL) more than doubled the previous local high count.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER: Sitka’s wintering Spotted Sandpiper was last observed 9 April 2018 (CPFG). This species otherwise arrived on time in early May.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS: Greater Yellowlegs arrived in Southeast Alaska on time: one at Ketchikan 25 March 2018 (PLH) and two at Gustavus 31 March 2018 (NKD) were the first noted.

WILSON’S PHALAROPE: A pair of Wilson’s Phalaropes was found at the Mendenhall Wetlands 28 May 2018 (PAR, BAA, MWS; Figure 8). This shorebird is a rare migrant and summer visitant to Southeast Alaska, though it has been found almost exclusively (and nearly annually) in the Gustavus and Juneau areas.

Figure 8.–Male (bottom) and female (top) Wilson’s Phalaropes at the Mendenhall Wetlands, near Juneau, 28 May 2018. *Photo by Patty A. Rose*

FRANKLIN’S GULL: A Franklin’s Gull at Sitka 11–28 May 2018 (MRG; CPFG, DJK, m.obs.; photo) provided a very rare sighting. This species has been recorded nearly annually in Southeast Alaska, but it has been found most frequently in the Ketchikan area in the fall (Heinl and Piston 2009).

RING-BILLED GULL: A Ring-billed Gull at Sitka 11 May 2018 (CPFG, photo) provided the only report this spring. This species is a rare migrant and summer visitant throughout most of Southeast Alaska and an uncommon fall migrant in the Ketchikan area (Heinl and Piston 2009).

CALIFORNIA GULL: California Gull sightings in northern Southeast Alaska, where rare, included singles at Sitka 14 March 2018 (CPFG), 24–25 April 2018 (DJK), and 16 May 2018 (CPFG), two in Icy Strait 2 May 2018 (KLC), and singles at Gustavus 2 May 2018 (CW), Glacier Bay 19 May 2018 (NKD), and Hoonah 28 May 2018 (ABu).
ICELAND GULL: At least one Kumlien’s Iceland Gull was documented at Sitka, an adult amongst 100 Thayer’s types on 9 March 2018 (CPFG; Figure 9). This subspecies is very rare in Alaska and there are around 10 photo-documented records for Southeast Alaska.

ALEUTIAN TERN: Ten Aleutian Terns in Glacier Bay 9 May 2015 (NKD) provided the 2nd earliest local arrival date. This species is a rare summer visitant and breeder in Glacier Bay, at the eastern fringe of its range; it typically arrives around mid-May (earliest 2 May 2015, NKD).

CASPIAN TERN: First arriving Caspian Terns were noted at Gustavus 21 April 2018 (NKD), where maximum was 14 on 13 May 2018 (NKD). A flock of 17 at Ketchikan 5 May 2018 (SCH) provided the only other double-digit count of the spring and established a new local high count. Typical small numbers were observed elsewhere through the end of the period (Sitka, Juneau, Prince of Wales Island, Haines).

BLACK TERN: Among the most unusual finds of the spring was a Black Tern at the Chilkoot River outlet, near Haines, 5 May 2018 (m.obs.; MD, SJ; Figure 10); it represented only the 4th Southeast Alaska record and the earliest ever in Alaska by more than two weeks. Most of the 15 or so Alaska records are from the eastern Interior; it nests as close as central interior and northeastern British Columbia, southeastern Yukon, and southwestern Northwest Territories (Heath et al. 2009).

Figure 9—Kumlien’s Iceland Gull (Larus glaucooides kumlieni) at Sitka 9 March 2018. Note bird’s gray wing tips compared to the black wing tips of the adjacent Thayer’s Iceland Gulls (L. g. thayeri), and the bird’s short, slender bill. Photo by Connor P. F. Goff
ARCTIC TERN: Record early Arctic Terns were observed in the Juneau area 14 April 2018 (one; LAL, photo) and 17 April 2018 (four; GBV). This species typically arrives across coastal Southeast and South-central Alaska during the last week of April and is quite rare prior to 20 April. The previous early Southeast Alaska arrival date was 18 April 2007 (NKD), and the earliest Alaska record I know of is 7 April 2017 at Kodiak Island (R. A. MacIntosh, eBird).

SHORT-TAILED/SOOTY SHEARWATER: Interesting shearwater observations were made from the cruise-ship *Emerald Princess* in early May (PEL). On 1 May 2018, 7,000 Sooty Shearwaters were observed in the Hecate Strait/Dixon Entrance area, including 2,000 in Alaska waters. On 4 May 2018, 5,500 Short-tailed Shearwaters but only 15 Sooty Shearwaters were observed off the west coast of Chichagof Island. All of the Short-tailed Shearwaters were in fresh plumage, whereas all of the Sooty Shearwaters were in worn plumage and in obvious molt.
RED-TAILED HAWK: An adult light-morph Red-tailed Hawk with tagged wings was observed at Gustavus 6 and 10 April 2018 and again on 7 June 2018 (NKD; Figure 12). The bird had been banded and released at the Portland International Airport, Oregon, 12 March 2018, where it was identified as subspecies harlani (Carole Hallett, PDX Raptors; Figure 12; identification fide William S. Clark). Another Harlan’s Hawk was reported at the Mendenhall Wetlands 16 May 2018 (GBV, MWS). This subspecies nests from Interior and South-central Alaska (Gibson and Withrow 2015) east to Yukon and northern British Columbia (Preston and Beane 2009). It is a rare migrant and local breeder at the periphery of this range in mainland northern Southeast Alaska.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK: A Rough-legged Hawk was a nice find near Sitka 6 May 2018 (EB, photo). This species is a rare migrant in Southeast Alaska and is primarily found along the mainland where suitable habitat is more prevalent.

GOLDEN EAGLE: Most interesting were sightings of an immature Golden Eagle at Sitka, presumably the same bird, on 29 April 2018 (CPFG; Figure 14) and again about a week later (CPS). This species is very rare in Southeast Alaska away from the northern mainland.
The rufous chest and richly colored underparts of this adult Red-tailed Hawk at Gravina Island 18 March 2018 identifies it as the Alaska Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis alascensis*). Clark (2018b) recently published a nice summary of the distribution, taxonomic history, and identification of this subspecies, which nests in the coastal temperate rainforest of Southeast Alaska and British Columbia. It largely departs Southeast Alaska in winter, though it is a very rare winter visitant, particularly in the southern part of the region (Heinl and Piston 2009). Spring migrants begin returning to southern Southeast Alaska in March, and migration peaks in April. *Photo by Jim H. Lewis*

Figure 14.–A young Golden Eagle at Sitka 29 April 2018 provided a very rare record for the outer coast of Southeast Alaska. *Photo by Connor Goff*
GREAT HORNED OWL: Mobbing crows alerted Sitka birders to a Great Horned Owl 20 May 2018 (MRG, photo). This species is an uncommon resident on the mainland, but it appears to be rare in much of the Alexander Archipelago.

SNOWY OWL: A late winter/early spring Snowy Owl was observed at about 1600’ elevation in the hills just north of Auke Bay, near Juneau, 16 March 2018 (DDR). This species is an irregular visitant to Southeast Alaska (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959), primarily in late fall and normally at low elevation.

NORTHERN HAWK OWL: A wintering Northern Hawk Owl at the Mendenhall Wetlands was observed through 14 March 2018 (fide GBV). This owl is rare in Southeast Alaska and most reports are from the northern mainland.

NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL: Late-spring observations of Northern Pygmy-Owls, presumably breeding birds, included one at Farm Island, Stikine River, 30 April 2018 (WTS), two at Prince of Wales Island 3 May 2018 (MS), and singles at Hoonah 12 May 2018 (ACC) and Juneau 26 May 2018 (BAA, MWS, BW).

NORTHERN FLICKER: Single Northern Flickers were reported at Hoonah 29 April 2018 (ACC) and Gustavus 8 May 2018 (NKD, SLN). This species is uncommon year-round in southern Southeast Alaska and along the outer coast north to Sitka, but it is rare on the northern Southeast Alaska mainland.

GYRFALCON: Most unusual was a report of two Gyrfalcons that attacked domestic ducks in a Mitkof Island yard, near Petersburg, 10 April 2018 (KH; Figure 15). This falcon is a very rare migrant and winter visitant in Southeast Alaska, and most reports are from the northern mainland.

Figure 15.—Normally if a person reports that a raptor attacked their domestic fowl it would be a sure bet to assume the culprit was a Northern Goshawk. It was quite a surprise, therefore, to hear of a report of two Gyrfalcons attacking domestic ducks in a Petersburg yard—and equally surprising to be provided stunning photos of a Gyrfalcon (shown here 10 April 2018), a very rare migrant and winter visitant to Southeast Alaska. Photo by Katherine Holmlund
OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER: An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Juneau 30 April 2018 (LAL) tied the previous early arrival date for Southeast Alaska (30 April 1987, Mitkof Island; Peter J. Walsh). Only four additional sightings of single Olive-sided Flycatchers were entered in eBird for the entire region this spring, a very low number and a continuation of several consecutive springs of few reports.

PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER: A Pacific-slope Flycatcher at Ketchikan 27 April 2018 was the 2nd earliest local arrival date ever and one of few in April (AWP, SCH). None were seen again until 6 May 2018 (AWP, SCH). First arrivals were noted on 8 May 2018 at Wrangell, Hoonah, Sitka, and Juneau (BHD, ACC, DYT, GBV).

EASTERN PHOEBE: An Eastern Phoebe at Hoonah 26–27 May 2018 (ACC, recording; Figure 16) provided only the 4th Southeast Alaska record. This eastern species breeds in small numbers as close as northeastern British Columbia and extreme southeastern Yukon (Weeks 2011).

Figure 16.–Eastern Phoebe at Hoonah 26 May 2018, only the fourth to be found in Southeast Alaska. Excellent recordings of this bird’s song can be heard at https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S46071005. Photo by Amy C. Courtney

SAY’S PHOEBE: Single Say’s Phoebes were reported at Skagway 10 May 2018 (CEF) and 13 May 2018 (PM, TW, PH; photo). Although this species is a casual migrant in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978), it nests in northern British Columbia, not too far over the border from Skagway (Campbell et al. 1997).

CASSIN’S VIREO: A Cassin’s Vireo at Blind Slough 16 May 2018 (BLH, recording) provided the 2nd Mitkof Island record and one of very few for the Alexander Archipelago. Another Cassin’s was singing at the Mendenhall Wetlands 29 May 2018 (GBV recording, MWS; Figure 17). This vireo is a very rare annual visitant to mainland Southeast Alaska (DeCicco and Hajdukovitch 2008).
WARBLING VIREO: A Warbling Vireo at Gustavus 30 May 2018 (NKD) was just west of the species’ normal range and added to the half dozen or so local reports (all since 2010). This species is an uncommon or common migrant and breeder in deciduous forests along mainland rivers north to the Haines and Skagway areas (Kessel and Gibson 1978, Johnson et al. 2008), as well as on some islands close to the mainland in the southern part of the region (Heinl and Piston 2009).

HORNED LARK: A Horned Lark at Juneau 17 April 2018 (GBV) was, surprisingly, the only report of the spring. This species is a rare or locally uncommon migrant in Southeast Alaska, primarily on the mainland.

PURPLE MARTIN: One of the highlights of the spring was a male Purple Martin at Gustavus 13 May 2018 (NKD, photo), which provided only the 4th Southeast Alaska record. There are 20+ records of this swallow scattered across the entire state, nearly all of which are from spring and summer. It nests as close as southwestern British Columbia and central Alberta (Brown and Tarof 2013).

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW: Two Violet-green Swallows at Ketchikan 14 April 2018 (SCH, BLL) were slightly early. This species did not arrive elsewhere until the end of April/early May when some very large numbers were reported, including 85 at Juneau 30 April 2018 (BS), 110 at Skagway 3 May 2018 (BBP), and 170 at the Stikine River mouth 5 May 2018 (BLH).

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW: Single Northern Rough-winged Swallows were reported at Gustavus 12–26 May 2018 (NKD, BBP), where very rare, and Ketchikan 17 May 2018 (RT), where rare but annual. This swallow is a rare migrant and breeder in Southeast Alaska, primarily on the mainland (Kessel and Gibson 1978) and southern islands near the mainland.
CLIFF SWALLOW: A Cliff Swallow at Ketchikan 19 April 2018 (AWP, SCH) was very early. Others were reported at Sitka 29 April 2018 (one, CPFG, MRG), Ketchikan 14 May 2018 (one, AWP), Skagway 1–3 May 2018 (one–two; BBP, ABu), and Juneau 30 April–24 May 2018 (m.obs.; maximum, six 1 May 2018, ACC). This species is a rare spring migrant and very rare summer visitant and breeder in Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978).

BARN SWALLOW: First arriving Barn Swallows were very early at Ketchikan 27 April 2018 (LEB, AWP, SCH) and Juneau 30 April 2018 (SEGU, AS, TJD, GBV).

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE: A Black-capped Chickadee was reported at Haines 18 March 2018 (MD, SJ). This species is an uncommon resident along the northern Southeast Alaska mainland in the Chilkat, Taiya, Taku, and Stikine river valleys (Kessel and Gibson 1978, Johnson et al. 2008).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported in about the same small numbers as late winter: ones–twos all spring at Gustavus (NKD), one at Haines 16 April 2018 (MD), three at Wrangell 20–21 April 2018 (KLC, CW), singles in the Juneau area 22 April 2018 (LRSS) and 19 May 2018 (m.obs.), and one at Sitka 1 April 2018 and 19 May 2018 (MRG, DJK).

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET: Single Ruby-crowned Kinglets at Ketchikan 16 March 2018 (AWP) and Sitka 17 March (2018) were very early and followed closely by others at both locations. First arrivals elsewhere were 30 March 2018 at Juneau (three; SR) and 4 April 2018 at Petersburg and Gustavus (ELY, NKD); however, migrants were not common until late April–early May.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD: Mountain Bluebirds were reported in lower than normal numbers at Skagway (one, 10 April 2018, KB) and Juneau 13 April–15 May 2018, where maximum was only three on 17 April 2018 (GBV). 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.

TOWNSEND’S SOLITAIRE: Ketchikan’s wintering Townsend’s Solitaire was last observed 6 April 2018 (SCH, AWP). There were no reports of migrants.

DUSKY THRUSH: Sitka’s wintering Dusky Thrush, Southeast Alaska’s 3rd record, was last reported 7 March 2018 (LPP).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: Only two Bohemian Waxwings were reported, one at Sitka 4 March 2018 (CPFG) and a late bird at Juneau 29 April 2018 (MJM, photo).

EVENING GROSBEAK: Evening Grosbeaks from last winter’s incursion visited feeders well into the spring: seven at Juneau through 1 April 2018 (SH), two at Hoonah through 7 April 2018 (ACC), and up to six at Haines through 3 May 2018 (JMS, photo). This species is a very rare visitant to Southeast Alaska.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH: A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch at Juneau 6–10 March 2018 (SH) and two (one each of subspecies littoralis and tephrocotis) at Auke Bay 9 March 2018 (GBV) represented the last of the small numbers that wintered in that area. This species is a rare or uncommon migrant and winter visitant in southeastern Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978), primarily on the northern mainland.

PURPLE FINCH: Wintering Purple Finches were last observed at Hoonah 9 March 2018 (ACC, photo), Sitka 16 March 2018 (CPFG), and Ketchikan 8 April 2018 (JFK, AWP, SCH).
COMMON REDPOLL: Small numbers of Common Redpolls were present throughout most of Southeast Alaska during March and April; maximum was up to 200 in the Gustavus area in mid-March (NKD), and latest was 12 at Skagway 4 May 2018 (BBP).

CROSSBILLS: Both Red and White-winged crossbills were present in relatively low numbers all spring (no large numbers reported anywhere), with White-winged Crossbills being reported only in northern Southeast Alaska (Sitka, Hoonah, Gustavus, Juneau).

PINE SISKIN: Pine Siskins were reported in moderate numbers in most of Southeast Alaska this spring. Estimates of 100–200 birds were reported only in the Juneau, Hoonah, and Gustavus areas, and they were generally most numerous in March (April in Gustavus), with numbers declining at most locations later into the spring.

SAVANNAH SPARROW: A Savannah Sparrow at Gustavus 21 March 2018 (NKD) established a new local early arrival date by a week, and they also appeared early at Ketchikan (one, 23 March 2018; KMR) and Sitka (two, 25 March 2018; DYT). In what seems to be a normal, annual pattern of occurrence, a few continued to be found at both Sitka and Ketchikan through mid-April but migration did not really commence until late April, when they were abundant at Ketchikan and first arrivals were noted at northern inside areas at Gustavus 25 April 2018 (NKD), Juneau 26 April 2018 (GBV), and Hoonah 27 April 2018 (ACC).

FOX SPARROW: Fox Sparrows poured into the Ketchikan area from mid- to late April. Although estimates of 335 on 14 April 2018 (AWP) and 290 on 22 April 2018 (AWP, SCH) were among the highest local counts ever (see Heinl and Piston 2009), those counts do not convey just how abundant this species was in brushy areas, along roadsides, and at feeders (e.g., 75 at one feeder on 24 April 2018 and 70 at another feeder on 26 April 2018; AWP). As is the case every spring, a substantial portion of these migrants consisted of subspecies that nest to the north and west along coastal South-central Alaska (e.g., sinuosa), in addition to Southeast Alaska nesting subspecies (townsendi/chilcatensis) (Figure 18), though no attempt was made to quantify relative numbers of subspecies or groups of subspecies.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: Only two wintering White-throated Sparrows lingered at feeders into the spring, singles at Gustavus through 13 April 2018 (NKD) and Ketchikan through 5 May 2018 (JFK, PEL).

WESTERN MEADOWLARK: A Western Meadowlark at the Mendenhall Wetlands 16–18 May 2018 (BAA; PAR, GBV, MWS, LRSS; Figure 19) was unusual, not only because this species is a casual visitor to Alaska, but also because nearly all other Alaska records are from late fall and winter, and the Juneau bird was the first to be found in Alaska in May. Although wintering birds have lingered at Ketchikan into March (latest 27 April 2003; Heinl and Piston 2009), the Juneau bird was presumably a spring overshoot rather than a wintering bird. Two June records from the eastern Interior (American Birds 46:1167 and 47:1140) are the only other Alaska records that did not involve fall migrants or wintering individuals. The Western Meadowlark nests as close as central British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).
Figure 18.–Fox Sparrows that migrate through Southeast Alaska in spring include a variety of subspecies in the Sooty Fox Sparrow group, as shown in this photograph taken at Ketchikan 24 April 2012. The bird on the right exhibits the uniform chocolate brown coloration (lacking contrasting paler gray face and nape), slightly slimmer bill, and (often) denser chest spots of subspecies *townsendi/chilcatensis* that nest in Southeast Alaska. The bird on the left exhibits the paler, reddish-brown crown and breast markings, contrasting grayish face and neck, and slightly thicker bill of subspecies that nest to the north and west along coastal South-central Alaska. This photo was chosen precisely because the two birds are so obviously different; however, plumage and size differences in the six named Sooty Fox Sparrow subspecies that nest in Alaska (Gibson and Withrow 2015) are moderately weak and clinal (Weckstein et al. 2002), trending from larger-bodied, larger-billed, and more reddish brown in the west, to smaller-bodied, smaller-billed, and darker brown to the east and south, which makes identifying them to named subspecies in the field difficult or impossible (e.g., see DeCicco et al. 2017). *Photo by Steven C. Heinl*

Figure 19.–Western Meadowlark at the Mendenhall Wetlands, near Juneau, 17 May 2018. *Photo by Mark W. Schwan*

**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD**: Single Brown-headed Cowbirds at Ketchikan 4 May 2018+ (KMR), Gustavus 12 May 2018 (NKD), Juneau 14–15 May 2018 (GBV), and Wrangell 20 May 2018 (KLC) represented a standard showing for this rare migrant.
RUSTY BLACKBIRD: Rusty Blackbird reports were few: singles at Sitka 8 March 2018 (CPFG), Gustavus 14 March 2018 (NKD), Ketchikan 20 March 2018 (JFK), and Skagway 13 May 2018 (MGK).

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER: First arrival dates for Orange-crowned Warblers appeared to be about on time: 19 April 2018 at Ketchikan (AWP), 26 April 2018 at Wrangell and Petersburg (BHD, BLH), 28 April 2018 at Sitka (DYT), and 29 April 2018 at Juneau and Hoonah (PAR, BAA, ACC).

AMERICAN REDSTART: A singing American Redstart at Skagway 20 May 2018 (good description; JV) was early, as normal arrival dates are during the last week of May. This species is an uncommon or locally common breeder in deciduous forests on the mainland river systems of Southeast Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978, Johnson et al. 2008).

YELLOW WARBLER: Early Yellow Warbler sightings included singles at Ketchikan 7 May 2018 (SCH), Sitka 10 May 2018 (DYT), and Gustavus 10 May 2018 (NKD). An estimated 225 at Ketchikan 28 May 2018 (tallied along South Tongass Highway following stormy weather the previous day; SCH, AWP, BLL) more than doubled the previous local high count of 94 on 28 May 2001 (Heinl and Piston 2009).

TOWNSEND’S WARBLER: A Townsend’s Warbler at Ketchikan 11 April 2018 (PLH) was one day short of tying the local early arrival date. Others followed there 14 April 2018+ (AWP). Arrival dates elsewhere were 17 April 2018 at Sitka (DJK), 21 April 2018 at Petersburg (BLH), and 24 April 2018 at Wrangell (BHD). Arrival dates for northern inside areas were much later: 27 April 2018 at Juneau (SH), 28 April 2018 at Hoonah (ACC), and 29 April 2018 at Gustavus (CW).

WILSON’S WARBLER: Unlike the Townsend’s Warbler, for which arrival dates across Southeast Alaska were more protracted, Wilson’s Warblers essentially appeared across the entire region during the first week of May. Earliest arrivals were noted at Ketchikan 30 April 2018 (three; SCH, MS), followed by reports 2 May 2018 at Cross Sound (ZB), 5 May 2018 at Gustavus (NKD), 6 May 2018 at Sitka and Juneau (VV, GSB, AM, LRSS), 7 May 2018 at Petersburg (BLH), and 8 May 2018 at Wrangell, Pelican, and Hoonah (BHD, MWS, ACC).

WESTERN TANAGER: Single Western Tanagers reported at Wrangell 3 May 2018 (BG) and Skagway 7 May 2018 (LM) were very early, as this species typically does not arrive until after mid-May. A male at Port Frederick, Chichagof Island, 20–23 May 2018 (ACC) was unusual so far from the mainland and provided only the 2nd local report. One was also observed 27 May 2018 near Juneau, where this species is rare but regular (GBV). This species is an uncommon probable breeder along the mainland rivers of Southeast Alaska north to the Haines and Skagway areas (Kessel and Gibson 1978, Johnson et al. 2008), and is rare elsewhere in Southeast Alaska.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK: Single Black-headed Grosbeaks were observed at Ketchikan feeders 25 May 2018 (JL, photo) and 26 May 2018 (KMR, photo). This species is a very rare migrant and summer visitant to Southeast Alaska, and it has been reported nearly annually over the last 20+ years.
LITERATURE CITED


