

**Gustavus/Glacier Bay Summer Bird Sightings**  
**June-July 2013**

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This summer will be remembered for its exceptionally pleasant weather with warm, sunny days and just enough rain to keep things green. The contrast between this summer and the cold, wet summer of 2012 made this year even more enjoyable. It was also an exceptional summer for bird observations including the first summer record of Ross's Goose for southeast Alaska, the first local Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, the first local record of nesting Caspian Terns, an Eastern Kingbird, a Hammond's Flycatcher, two Wilson's Phalaropes, a Northern Waterthrush, a Tennessee Warbler, and multiple Chipping Sparrows. Although many birds evidently delayed nesting due to cold weather this spring, juveniles of many species were common this summer indicating a successful breeding season following last year's poor breeding season. Swallows, thrushes, kinglets, chickadees, terns, kittiwakes, and murrelets are examples of species that appeared to have good nesting success.

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Birds indicated as "rare" in summer on the southeast Alaska bird checklist (Heinl) are included here, even if they are not considered rare in summer for Gustavus/Glacier Bay.

Lake Gustavus, the Duck Pond, and the Gravel Pits are ponds near the airport.

**Greater White-fronted Goose**

Greater White-fronted Goose is very rare in summer. This summer's high numbers follow record numbers this spring.

26 on 2 June east of town. -BBP

7 on 3 June and 6 on 4 June east of town. -BBP, NKD

27 on 16 June at the mouth of the Salmon River. -NKD, JFS, AW

2 on 4 July east of town. -BBP



Greater White-fronted Geese near the Salmon River on 16 June. Photo Nat Drumheller

### **Ross's Goose**

Following the area's first Ross's Goose this spring, one was found east of town on 2 June with Greater White-fronted Geese by Bruce Paige. Presumably the same bird from the spring, this is the first summer record for southeast Alaska according to Steve Heintz. The Ross's Goose was also seen on 3 June (BBP) and 4 June (NKD, photo) east of town with Greater White-fronted Geese.



The Ross's Goose (far left) with Greater White-fronted Geese over the beach east of town on 4 June.

Photo Nat Drumheller

### **Brant**

Brant were present through the period along Gustavus beaches and in Glacier Bay. Numbers declined through June with only scattered observations of a few birds after early July.

Some high counts:

- 220 on 4 June east of town. -NKD
- 90 on 10 June east of town. -BBP
- 76 on 13 June near the Salmon River. -BBP
- 60 on 16 June west of town. -NKD, JFS, AW
- 30 on 21 June in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD
- 25 on 2 July in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD
- 10 on 8 July in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD
- 1 on 10 July west of town. -NKD
- 3 on 29 July east of town. -BBP

### **Unidentified Swan**

1 on 15 July in Tarr Inlet in Glacier Bay. -NKD Either a Trumpeter Swan or a Tundra Swan, both are unexpected in summer.

### **Ring-necked Duck**

6 on 1 June on ponds near the airport (BBP), with a few through 9 June, and one through 25 June. -BBP, NKD

### **Lesser Scaup**

At least one was at Lake Gustavus from 1 to 14 June. -BBP, NKD

**Black Scoter**

2 on 11 June in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD

**Long-tailed Duck**

A few were widespread in Glacier Bay through June. -NKD, PL, and others

**Bufflehead**

Several lingered until at least 3 June at Bartlett Cove. -NKD

1 on 5 June in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD

**Yellow-billed Loon**

1 on 17 June in mid Glacier Bay was the only sighting. -NKD

**Short-tailed Shearwater**

1 on 14 July in Sitakaday Narrows, Glacier Bay, with 1,000's of feeding gulls was unexpected inside Glacier Bay. -PL

**Great Blue Heron**

At least 4 active nests with calling young and adults were observed on 6 June in the forest at Bartlett Cove near Blackwater Pond. -NKD

Great Blue Herons have traditionally nested in this area according to BBP and park staff.

**Osprey**

1 on 1 June at Lake Gustavus. -BBP

**Northern Harrier**

At least two were around town from 1 to 19 June. -BBP, NKD

**Red-tailed Hawk**

Two were north of town through the period where they were probably nesting. Red-tailed Hawks have been suspected of nesting there in past summers. -NKD

There were numerous sightings of Red-tailed Hawks in and near town during the period. -BBP and others

1 Harlan's type on 14 June was near the airport. -BBP

**Sora**

A Sora discovered on 7 June at the Duck Pond by Bruce Paige remained there until at least 21 June. -BBP, NKD, JFS

There are a handful of records for Sora in Gustavus. Most are from summer at this same pond.

**Sandhill Crane**

For the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive summer, Sandhill Cranes were present near town. A minimum of 4 were seen and heard through the period. These likely represented 2 pairs. Of the many reports of cranes being seen and heard, one pair was seen regularly near the beach east of

town during June. Four cranes were seen together on town beaches during the second half of July. -BBP, TML, NKD, HPL, and others



Sandhill Cranes east of town on 20 July.

Photo Bruce Paige

**Black-bellied Plover**

1 on 23 and 26 July near the Salmon River. -NKD

**Killdeer**

An adult with a chick on 25 June was inside the airport perimeter fence where Killdeer had been in May 2013 and in June 2012. -NKD

Killdeer is a rare but regular migrant. Breeding at Gustavus was more common in the 1960's (Wik and Streveler, Birds of Glacier Bay National Monument), but has not been observed since the early 1970's according to Bruce Paige.

**Solitary Sandpiper**

1 on 22 June at the gravel pits. -BBP, NKD

**Whimbrel**

1 on 20 June east of town. -BBP

Looking at the following shorebirds, it is apparent there was an early pulse of shorebirds moving through on July 10.

**Black Turnstone**

7 on 10 July east of town. -BBP

**Surfbird**

7 on 10 July east of town (BBP) and small numbers on two islands in Glacier Bay on 10 July. -TML

**Sanderling**

4 on 4 June east of town. -NKD

**Semipalmated Sandpiper**

1-3 from 27 June through the end of the period near town. -BBP

A minimum of 20 on 10 July near the Salmon River. -NKD

**Western Sandpiper**

1 on 4 June east of town. -NKD

8 on 13 June west of town.-BBP

A handful along Gustavus beaches from mid June through the end of the period.-BBP, NKD

115 on 2 July east of town. -BBP

450 on 10 July east of town. -BBP

**Least Sandpiper**

300 on 10 July along the Salmon River. -NKD

**Baird's Sandpiper**

3 on 31 July near the Salmon River. -BBP

**Pectoral Sandpiper**

1 on 28 July, 10 on 25 July, and 18 on 31 July near town. -BBP

**Short-billed Dowitcher**

6 on July 10 east of town. -BBP

**Long-billed Dowitcher**

1 to several from 14 July through the end of the period at streams along Gustavus beaches. -BBP, NKD

**Wilson's Phalarope**

Two on 27 June on the Salmon River. -BBP

This is the 6<sup>th</sup> local record and the 2<sup>nd</sup> summer record.

**Sabine's Gull**

1 on 18 July in lower Glacier Bay. -JFS

**California Gull**

1 to 4 from 22 June through the end of the period in mixed gull flocks near town. -NKD, BBP

**Thayer's Gull**

1 to a few from 23 June through the end of the period in mixed gull flocks near town. -NKD, BBP

### **Glaucous Gull**

1 on 14 July at the mouth of Glacier Bay. -PL

1 on 22 July in Glacier Bay. -MWS

### **Aleutian Tern**

Aleutian Terns were seen near the entrance to the west arm of Glacier bay on a number of dates from 21 June to 19 July (maximum=7). Juveniles were among them on several dates from 12 to 19 July (maximum=3). -NKD, PL

Approximately 40 on 23 June in Adams Inlet, Glacier Bay were acting defensively among about 500 nesting Arctic Terns on the Adams outwash along with other nesting birds. Only one Aleutian Tern nest was observed, but a full survey was not conducted due to the presence of Arctic Tern chicks. -TML, KM

This is the same location where Yumi Arimitsu and her crew found 37 Aleutian Terns nesting in 2005.

Approximately 180 were nesting, with fledglings observed, on 18 July at Dry Bay on an Island in the Alsek River. -TML

### **Caspian Tern**

On 13 June, while collecting data on nesting Glaucous-winged Gulls, Tania Lewis and Christopher Behnke found about 20 Caspian Terns and 8 nests on Flapjack Island in lower Glacier Bay where Caspian Terns had been acting defensively in May 2013. This is the first record of Caspian Terns nesting in Glacier Bay, although nesting has been suspected for several years.

One to several Caspian Terns were reported along Gustavus beaches, in Bartlett Cove, and in Glacier Bay through the period. Numbers at Gustavus began increasing in the second half of July with at least 30 there on 26 July. No juvenile Caspian Terns were seen until early August. -NKD, BBP

Two were at the Adams outwash on 23 June with nesting Arctic and Aleutian Terns, but no nest was observed. -TML, KM

One at Gustavus on 10 July had been banded as a chick at the Copper River delta, Alaska in July 2009. -NKD Banding information from Yasuko Suzuki, OSU.

### **Parasitic Jaeger**

At least one pair nested at the Reid Glacier as usual. -misc. observers

A pair was at the Adams outwash in Adams Inlet, Glacier Bay on 23 June, but no nest was observed. -TML, KM

Multiple nesting and with fledglings on 18 July at Dry Bay. -TML, KM

### **Long-tailed Jaeger**

1 on 7 June in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD

1 on 14 July at the entrance to Glacier Bay. -PL

### **Kittlitz's Murrelet**

Approximately 800 were near the mouth of Glacier Bay on 3 June. -PL

Kittlitz's Murrelets began moving into the upper west arm of Glacier Bay in good numbers in mid June with multiple hundreds seen regularly thereafter.

Over 500 were above Composite Island on 17 June.

Over 500 were in Tarr Inlet on 5 July.

Numbers probably exceeding 1,000 were in the upper west arm on 9 and 12 July. -NKD  
300 were counted there on 14 July (PL) and numbers in the west arm gradually declined through the rest of July. -NKD

### **Horned Puffin**

This summer, Horned Puffins were difficult to find at the Margerie Glacier kittiwake colony in Glacier Bay where they have reliably been found in small numbers in the past.

1 to several were seen through the period in Glacier Bay. -misc. observers

The high count was 5 on both 3 June and 14 July. -PL

### **Eurasian Collared-Dove**

Eurasian Collared-Doves were seen and heard through the period at a number of locations around town by many people. Four different neighborhoods, including Rink Creek, saw and heard doves regularly, indicating that there were probably several pairs of doves nesting or attempting to nest at Gustavus this summer.

The maximum at one location was 6 during July (JO) in the neighborhood that had the most dove activity this summer.

Reports of Eurasian Collared-Doves outside of Gustavus were:

1 in early June at Bartlett Cove. -HH

2 near a home on Lemesurier Island in Icy Strait on several dates in June and then one at that location through early July. -BC, HPL

1 on 19 June on Drake Island in Glacier Bay. -HPL, RKN

### **Great Horned Owl**

1 heard on several nights in mid July in the Good River neighborhood. -RFWY

### **Barred Owl**

1 on 15 June in the Good River neighborhood. -JM

1 on 6 and 25 July in town. -MB, NKD

1 on 25 July north of town. -BBP

### **Short-eared Owl**

1 on 21 and 23 July east of town. -BBP

On both days, the owl was flying high from north to south, so this was likely two different migrating owls.

### **Northern Saw-whet Owl**

Northern Saw-whet Owls raised five young in a nest box at the Sharmans' in the Good River neighborhood. The young owls fledged during the last week of June. -ES, LS



The Northern Saw-whet Owl nest at the Sharmans'. Left on 9 June with 12 shrews and a vole visible. Right on 23 June. Photos Lewis Sharman

**Vaux's Swift**

1 on 4 June at Lake Gustavus. -NKD, BBP

**American Three-toed Woodpecker**

1 on about 8 June at Bartlett Cove. -CE

2 on 19 June north of town. -BBP

**Merlin**

1 on 2 and 6 June at Bartlett Cove. -NKD

1 on 12 June near the airport. -BBP

1 on 22 July carrying prey flew from Gustavus to Pleasant Island. -NKD

1 on 24 July north of town. -BBP

1 on 27 July east of the town dock. -BBP

**Peregrine Falcon**

1 on 14 July at the mouth of Glacier Bay. -PL

**Western Wood-Pewee**

1 on 1 June at Lake Gustavus. -BBP, NKD

1 on 22 June at the Gravel Pits. -NKD

1 on 24 June in town. -JFS

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**

The area's first Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was found on 16 June at Lake Gustavus by Allen Williams and Nat Drumheller and was also seen by Bruce Paige (photo) and Jim Johnson. The bird was singing, making it possible to identify it with certainty.



The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Lake Gustavus on 16 June.

Photos Bruce Paige

### **Alder Flycatcher**

One of the last migrants to arrive, Alder Flycatchers are regular in summer around Gustavus. This summer, they were more abundant than usual, being heard at many locations in and around town in late June. Two on 3 June northwest of Gustavus were the first of the season. -NKD

A minimum of 12 were along the northeast perimeter of the airport on 25 June (NKD) and a minimum of 14 were there on 30 June (BBP).

### **Hammond's Flycatcher**

1 on 13 June at Bartlett Cove was seen and heard singing in the forest along the Inner Lagoon. -NKD

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> record and the 2<sup>nd</sup> summer record according to Bruce Paige.

### **Eastern Kingbird**

An Eastern Kingbird on 30 July was northwest of town. -NKD, BBP

This is the fourth record and the third during the last several days of July.



The Eastern Kingbird on 30 July.

Photo Nat Drumheller

**Cliff Swallow**

1 on 1 June at Lake Gustavus. -NKD, BBP  
Cliff Swallow is rare spring through fall.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch**

Known to nest in the area in small numbers, Red-breasted Nuthatches were heard and seen regularly at a few locations in town through the season. An active nest was found in town that fledged young in late June or early July. -NKD

**European Starling**

None reported.

**Cedar Waxwing**

3 on 26 July at Lake Gustavus. -NKD  
With only one record prior to 2003, Cedar Waxwings have since been seen regularly in summer and fall and have nested at Gustavus.

**Northern Waterthrush**

1 on 1 June at Lake Gustavus. -BBP  
This is the first summer record. There are at least two previous records from fall.

**Tennessee Warbler**

One on 19 June in Tidal Inlet in Glacier Bay was recorded singing. -HPL, RKN  
Casual in summer and fall, this is the third summer record.

**Chipping Sparrow**

1 on 15 June in the Good River neighborhood (NKD), 3 there 16 June (BBP) and then 1 on 17 and 19 June (BBP).  
One on 24 June at the airport. -BBP  
Chipping Sparrow is very rare, so this was an unprecedented number of sightings.

**Western Tanager**

1 on 1 and 2 June at Lake Gustavus. -NKD, BBP  
Not annual, but becoming more regular. There are a dozen or so records for Western Tanager. Most are from early June.

**Brown-headed Cowbird**

2 on 1 June at Lake Gustavus. -BBP, NKD  
1 on 30 July northwest of town. -NKD

**Red Crossbill**

Small numbers through the period. -NKD

**White-winged Crossbill**

A few on 30 July were the only reported. -NKD

**Pine Siskin**

Fairly common through the period with young at feeders from late June on. -NKD, BBP



A Snow Bunting fledgling near the Reid Glacier on 2 July. Photo by Jen Sanders.