



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Alaska

Nome & Denali - Alaska Gold Rush

7th June to 17th June 2023 (11 days)



Smith's Longspur by Forrest Rowland

Nome lies on the Seward Peninsula and juts into the Bering Sea. It's a frontier town in a world where few such curiosities remain. Bordered on the west and south by the Bering Sea, the north and east by miles of trackless wilderness. Nome is a fascinating and challenging destination, accessible only by boat and aeroplane. During June, the midnight sun is at its brightest, the tundra is in full bloom, and the birds and mammals are breeding and therefore very active. Our tour will cover the prime birding areas along the coast, the tundra and the only boreal forest on the Seward Peninsula. Most of the birds are in their resplendent breeding plumage, rarely if ever seen in the 'lower 48'. We'll also make an extra effort to locate some of the Asian species that regularly occur around Nome. The road system here provides the very best access to the Alaska wilderness without an aeroplane. This is typically the best trip for Asian vagrants, and we expect to see around 90+ bird species, including Black-throated (Arctic) and Yellow-billed Loons, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Sabine's Gull, Gyrfalcon, Bluethroat, Eastern Yellow and White Wagtails. Mammal possibilities include the huge Grizzly (Brown) Bear, Moose, Caribou (some years), and Muskox. Sometimes, with great luck, a Beluga or Wolverine is spotted! Our lodging overlooks the Bering Sea, and being only a few years old offers the most comfortable accommodations in the area.

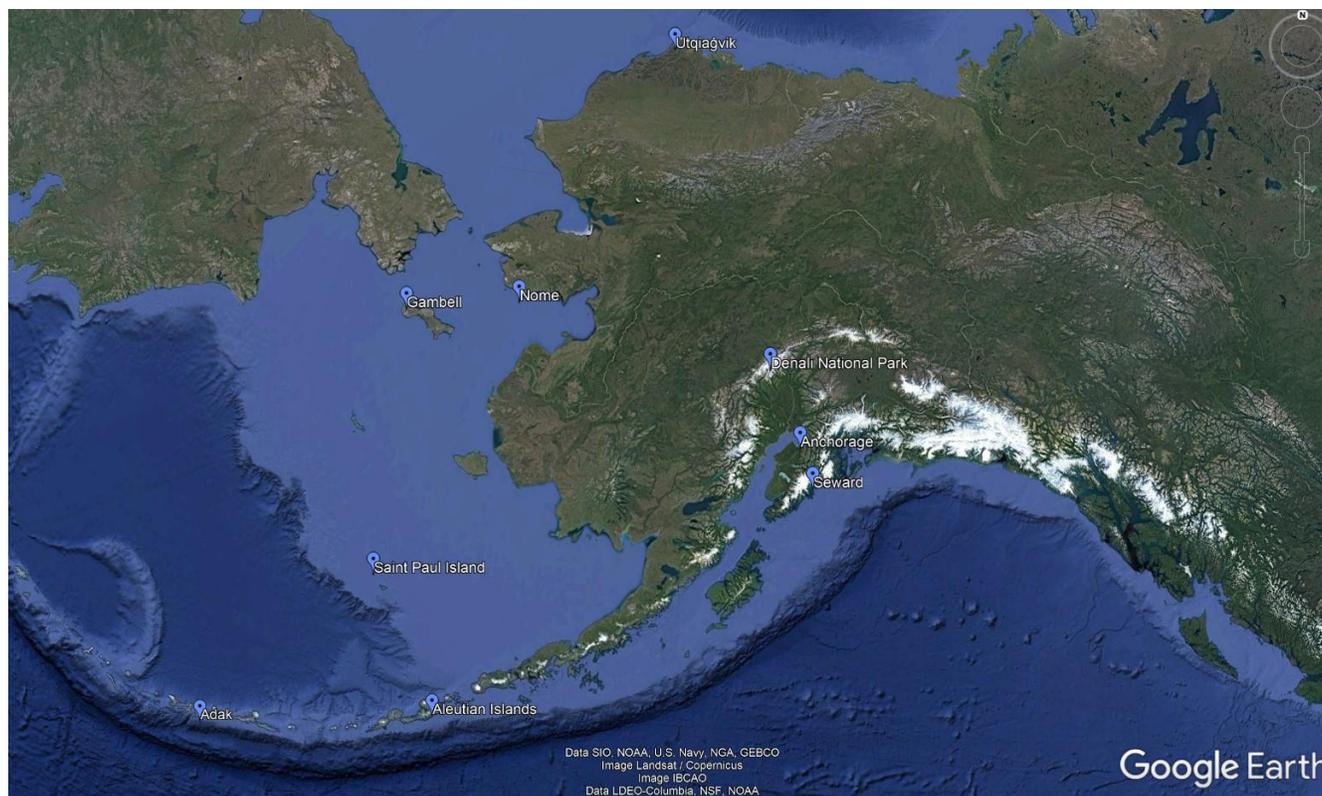
Our trip to magnificent Denali National Park and the wilderness surrounding it is as much about large mammals, and a big (!) mountain, as it is about birds. With the blessing of the weather gods, the scenery can be beyond marvellous, and we expect to see such stellar species as Trumpeter Swan, Willow Ptarmigan, Gyrfalcon, Long-tailed Jaeger, and perhaps even Northern Hawk-Owl and Smith's Longspur. And typically we also see a number of Grizzly Bears (often sows with cubs) as well as Caribou scattered about, some Dall Sheep, Moose and, if we are lucky, perhaps even Wolf. We'll also travel the gravel Denali Highway that parallels the stunning Alaska Range for 135 miles in our quest to see as many of the region's special birds as possible.

THE TOURS AT A GLANCE...

NOME & DENALI

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| Day 1 | Arrival in Anchorage |
| Day 2 | Fly to Nome and birding Seward Peninsula |
| Days 3 to 5 | Birding Nome |
| Day 6 | Depart from Nome to Anchorage |
| Day 7 | Drive to Denali |
| Days 8 to 10 | Birding and exploring Denali area |
| Day 11 | Drive back to Anchorage |

TOUR MAP



Nome & Denali - Alaska Gold Rush



American Golden Plover in breeding plumage by Markus Lilje

Day 1: Arrival into Anchorage. The tour begins with our welcome dinner in Anchorage. Look for a message or expect a call from your guide as to the dinner plans, but expect to meet for dinner in the lobby at 18:30. You will meet your fellow travellers and prepare for the Gold Rush of birding ahead!

Day 2: Depart from Anchorage Airport and fly to Nome. Departing by 7am (subject to change), we will arrive at the airport to obtain our E-tickets at the kiosk, after which we fly to Nome, and indeed, there is nowhere like it. Depending on the route, which can include a short stop at Prudhoe Bay, we'll



Bristle-thighed Curlew by David Shackelford

get settled in at our hotel in Nome, and then begin familiarizing ourselves with the area and picking up birds. Depending on any rarities that may be around, we may opt to bird Safety Lagoon, the Nome River Outlet, Nome Point, or the cemetery ponds. We'll spend the day carefully searching the shorelines, lagoons and ponds along the Bering Sea for rarities such as Black-throated (Arctic) and Yellow-billed Loons, Red-necked Stint, Slaty-backed Gull or Emperor Goose, as well as the many resident shorebirds, waterfowl and seabirds.

Day 3: Kougarak Road. Leaving early this morning, we will cover a wonderful 73-mile stretch that is the Kougarak Road. This superb



wilderness roads leads into the high tundra and mountains of the remote Seward Peninsula. Among our quarry is the endangered Bristle-thighed Curlews, which while nesting in the area, are often tricky and can involve a hike of some rigor. Regardless of how the curlew search goes, there are also Bluethroats and Gyrfalcon, Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaegers, and Golden Eagle lurking on the list of hopefuls too. Rock and Willow Ptarmigans are both good possibilities, while Eastern Yellow Wagtails are usually in the process of establishing territories. And always here, we'll keep a careful eye out Grizzly Bear, Moose, Wolf, Muskox and other magnificent mammals.



Bluethroat by Forrest Rowland

Day 4: Teller Road. This morning, we'll work our way out along Teller Road, another intensely scenic wilderness road, stopping at river crossings for Wandering Tattler, Blackpoll, Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warblers, Northern Waterthrush, Grey-cheeked Thrush, and whatever else may cross our paths. Checking in at Wooley Lagoon we will take in the view of a native whale-hunting outpost on the Bering Sea, and look to observe nesting Grey (Black-bellied), Pacific Golden and American Golden Plovers, in the process. Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers are abundant and sickle-billed Whimbrels are also possible. Long-tailed Jaegers hawk the air, often harassing shorebirds, and we should manage views of Northern Wheatear and Snow Bunting too. Depending on how we spend our time, if we reach the end of the road, we would find Teller itself, an Inupiat village that sits out on a spit in the bay. White Wagtail and many alcids, including Horned and Tufted Puffins, Pigeon and Black Guillemots and Common Murre, have been seen here, depending on the sea ice. We could also see Spotted Seals here, sometimes quite close to the shore.



Grizzly Bear by Markus Lilje

Day 5: Council Road. We'll drive along Safety Lagoon again this morning looking for shorebirds, waterfowl, geese, swans and loons. The road to Council can be difficult to traverse at times, but we hope to make it out to the small fishing village in the interior of Fish Creek. This area represents the only Boreal forest on the Seward Peninsula and should yield Varied Thrush, Boreal Chickadee, Rough-legged Buzzard (Hawk) and other alpine species.

Day 6: Depart from Nome and fly to Anchorage. After breakfast and a last



bit of nearby birding, we prepare to depart for the airport and our mid-day return flight to Anchorage. After we the rush of birds at spectacular Nome, we'll enjoy a restful evening in Anchorage, before setting out for Denali!

Day 7: Drive to Denali. We'll start the day at 6:30 with a Continental breakfast at the Coast, after which we'll depart for Denali Park. An amazing recent development on today's route was the massive wildfire locally known as the "Sockeye Burn". We will see how the forest regenerates, but if conditions are suitable we will make time to seek two recent-burn opportunists that are seldom encountered outside of such areas: American Three-toed Woodpecker and Black-backed Woodpecker. Last year's tour was very successful at this site indeed, finding cooperative breeding pairs of both scarce species! Eventually arriving in the town of Talkeetna, we'll break for lunch. We should arrive at our lodging outside the park about 16:00. Once we've checked in and had a bit of a break, we'll enjoy dinner in the little village outside of the park.



Northern Hawk-Owl by David Hoddinott

Day 8: Exploring Denali Park. After a very early continental breakfast, we head into the park headquarters and transfer to a park shuttle. We'll be taking the Eielson shuttle, an 8-hour journey affording outstanding views of the park and its surrounds, not to mention the local birds and wildlife. Not that we are bound to the shuttle, since it's permissible for riders to get off the bus and walk if you wish. The situation at the park is such that today trip leader(s) must function rather as a friend and traveling companion, and not a "guide" or tour leader. The park does not permit anyone other than their concessionaires out of the shuttle, so today we bird together as friends who enjoy birds and wildlife. Some of the birds one might see include Long-tailed Jaeger, Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Willow Ptarmigan, Northern Hawk-Owl and Northern Wheatear. Every year is different, but mammals can be abundant and possibilities include Grizzly Bear, Wolf, Moose, Lynx, Caribou, Red Fox, Coyote and Hoary Marmot. Out all day, we expect to return in the late afternoon. Dinner tonight will be enjoyed at the incomparable 229 Parks, spending another evening at Tonglen Lake Lodge.



Denali Highway scenery by Stephan Lorenz

Day 9: Depart for Denali Highway. Following another early breakfast, we'll hit the road for the spectacular Denali Highway. This is a great place for viewing the region's wildlife, and we'll make numerous stops along this 135-mile dirt



road that parallels the Alaska Range. We should see Trumpeter and Tundra Geese, Surf Scoters, Red-throated and Common Loons, Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes, Red-necked Phalarope, Wilson's Snipe, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Bohemian Waxwing, Boreal Chickadee and Two-barred (White-winged) Crossbill. We'll have a packed lunch along the way, eventually arriving at Tangle River Inn in the late afternoon where we will check in prior to enjoying dinner.



Arctic Warbler by Stephan Lorenz

Day 10: Full day birding Denali

Highway. Following breakfast this morning, we will then commence our explorations of the area. First, we'll search for Smith's Longspur, after which we'll drive back along Denali Highway in order to access some high country for several birds that are more likely to be seen here. Rock Ptarmigan, Whimbrel, American Golden Plover, Long-tailed Jaeger, Northern Wheatear, American Pipit, Grey-crowned Rosy Finch (uncommon), Lapland Longspur and Arctic Warbler are among the birds we might see. The same mammals from Denali Park can also be seen along the road here, but they are much wearier. In addition, this is the only place we have seen Wolverine in our 16 years of coming to the park, so be alert and keep a sharp eye out. After a final evening at Tangle River Inn and a final dinner together, we'll retire for the night to rest up for a last day of birding together.



Bohemian Waxwing by Adam Riley

Day 11: Depart for Anchorage. After breakfast this morning, we will depart for our return journey to Anchorage. We'll also keep our eyes peeled for other birds along the way as well as breaking for lunch en route. Time permitting, we might even make a quick run up Hatcher's Pass, near Anchorage. Last year's group made time for a brief search for White-tailed Ptarmigan at this site, and were successful, finding a female incubating eggs! Arriving in Anchorage in the late afternoon, we will bid a fond farewell to those who head for home, and say hello to any new arrivals who may join us for the trip ahead to Utqiagvik & Kenai.



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for these tours are displayed on our website.

The tour price includes:

Nome & Denali

- Roundtrip flights: Anchorage to Nome;
- Pickup and drop-off at Nome Airport;
- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 11;
- Drinking water throughout the tour;
- All lodgings as per the itinerary;
- Ground transportation;
- All taxes and reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services; and
- Tips for local guides and services.

Tour prices EXCLUDE:

- ANY international airfares.
- Any airfares other than stated above, taxes and visa costs;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Special gratuities (guide & boat tips); and
- Telephone calls, laundry and items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Please note:

- Road conditions can affect access to certain species, especially the Bristle-thighed Curlew in Nome. In recent years, the weather has been outstanding and access has been good along all routes but occasionally roads are impassable and then certain species become difficult or impossible to pursue.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.



d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters and restaurants) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS

Nome & Denali

Our Anchorage hotel offers regular shuttle service to/from Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, which is the most likely point of entry/exit for guests arriving into Alaska for this tour. The tour will commence at our hotel in Anchorage with our first dinner together at 18:30 on day 1. We recommend you arrive into Anchorage by 17:00 on Day 1 at the latest. If you arrive later or miss dinner your guide will leave information for you at the front desk about plans for Day 2. The tour will conclude late afternoon of Day 11, in Anchorage.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS

Ted Stevens International Airport, Anchorage (IATA: ANC) is the main port of entry for flights for these tours. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

