



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Alaska

Utqiagvik & Kenai – The Fjords & the Arctic Circle

17th to 23rd June 2023 (7 days)



Snowy Owl by Dave Kutilek

Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow) is the northernmost settlement in the United States, located on the edge of the Polar Ice Cap, more than 300 miles above the Arctic Circle. Vast seas of ice extend from Point Utqiagvik another 1,200 miles to the North Pole. From May to August, darkness never falls on Utqiagvik as the golden glow of the midnight sun fills the sky. For birders, High Arctic species are the main attraction here. Snowy Owls are common, Spectacled and Steller's Eiders are starting their very short breeding seasons in June, while Yellow-billed Loons also breed in the area. We'll visit the numerous tundra ponds to look for breeding species as well as travel to Point Utqiagvik in hopes of seeing some of the Arctic mammals – Polar Bears are fairly common during May and June. Many shorebirds, resplendent in their breeding plumages, are also possible here, with Buff-breasted, Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers all being regular breeders. Even Asian species such as Red-necked Stint and Curlew Sandpiper (both rare breeders) have been seen in Utqiagvik during June, while there is always the chance for an unexpected surprise!

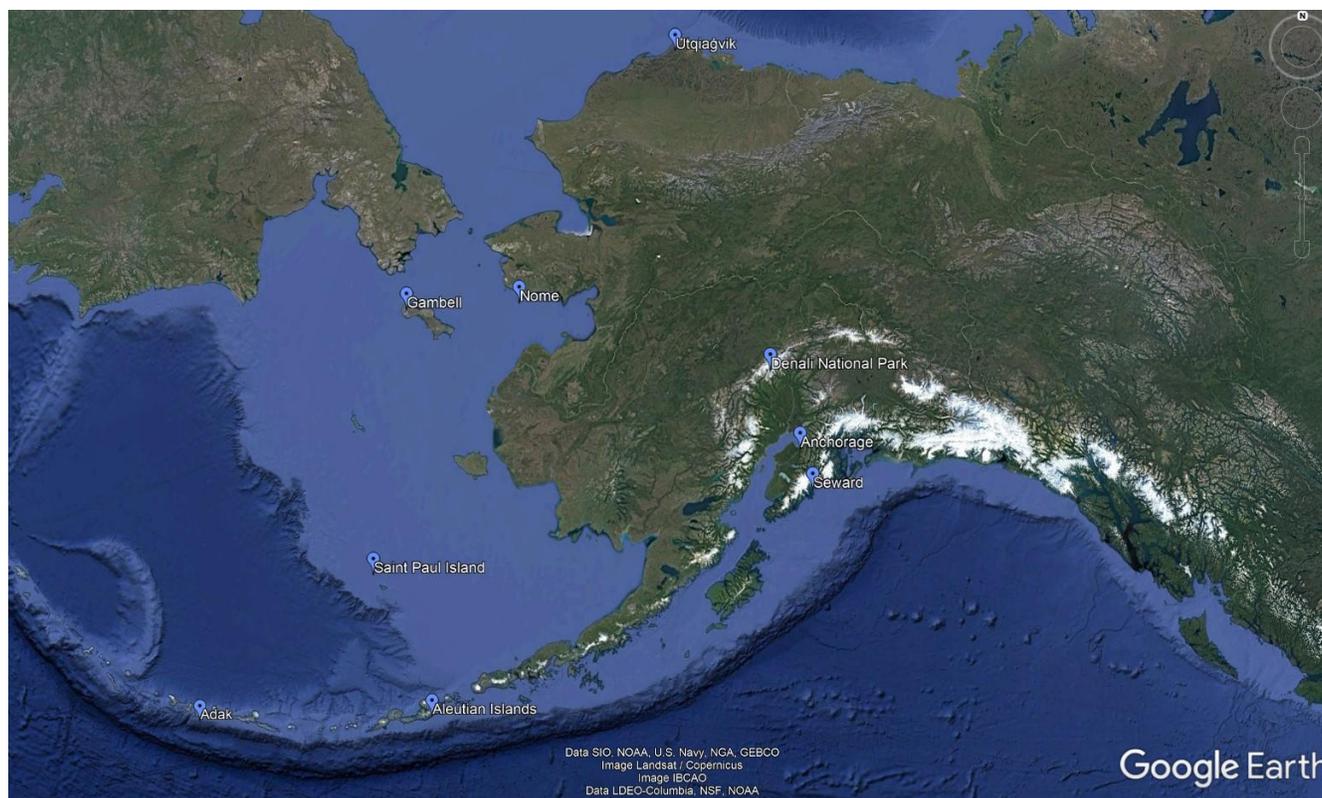
Then we head back to Anchorage and after a night there we make our way south along scenic Turnagain Arm and Cook Inlet, before arriving into the town of Seward. From here we'll take a boat trip through majestic Kenai Fjords National Park, one of the most spectacular parks in North America. Even just right in town, Bald Eagles are plentiful, and Sea Otters are seen swimming about playfully. Once out in Resurrection Bay and then amid glacial waters, highlights will no doubt be the thousands of alcids, including many murrelets, Tufted and Horned Puffins and Parakeet and Rhinoceros Auklets, and with luck the sneaky Kittlitz's Murrelets. We also shall enjoy good chances for Humpback Whales, Orcas, Steller's Sea Lions and even other sea mammals and still other seabirds.

THE TOURS AT A GLANCE...

UTQIAGVIK & KENAI

Day 1	Arrive in Anchorage
Day 2	Depart from Anchorage Airport for Utqiagvik
Day 3	Birding Utqiagvik
Day 4	Morning birding, then depart for Anchorage
Day 5	Depart for Seward
Day 6	Full day boat trip into Kenai Fjords NP
Day 7	Depart for Anchorage where the tour will conclude

TOUR MAP



Utqiagvik & Kenai – The Fjords & the Arctic Circle



Pine Grosbeak by Forrest Rowland

Day 1: Arrival into Anchorage. The tour begins with our welcome dinner in Anchorage. Meet in the lobby at 18:30 for dinner and to meet your fellow travellers and prepare for birding in the Fjords and the Arctic Circle.

Day 2: Flight to Utqiagvik, and afternoon birding. Flights do not depart until mid to late afternoon, so we'll begin the morning with a leisurely breakfast, followed by some birding just out of the hotel around Hood Lake. This is the world's busiest seaplane lake, and watching all the planes come and go is quite an experience, while the birding can be quite good as well. Often Orange-crowned Warblers sing out stridently, while Alder Flycatchers falsely advertise "free beer!", and then on the lake itself Barrow's Goldeneye, and Red-necked Grebes are often found, while a dizzying array of swallows glide about. Mid-day we will head for the airport, and usually our flight departs about 15:00, arriving into Utqiagvik at about 19:00 (flights subject to change). After we check into our hotel,

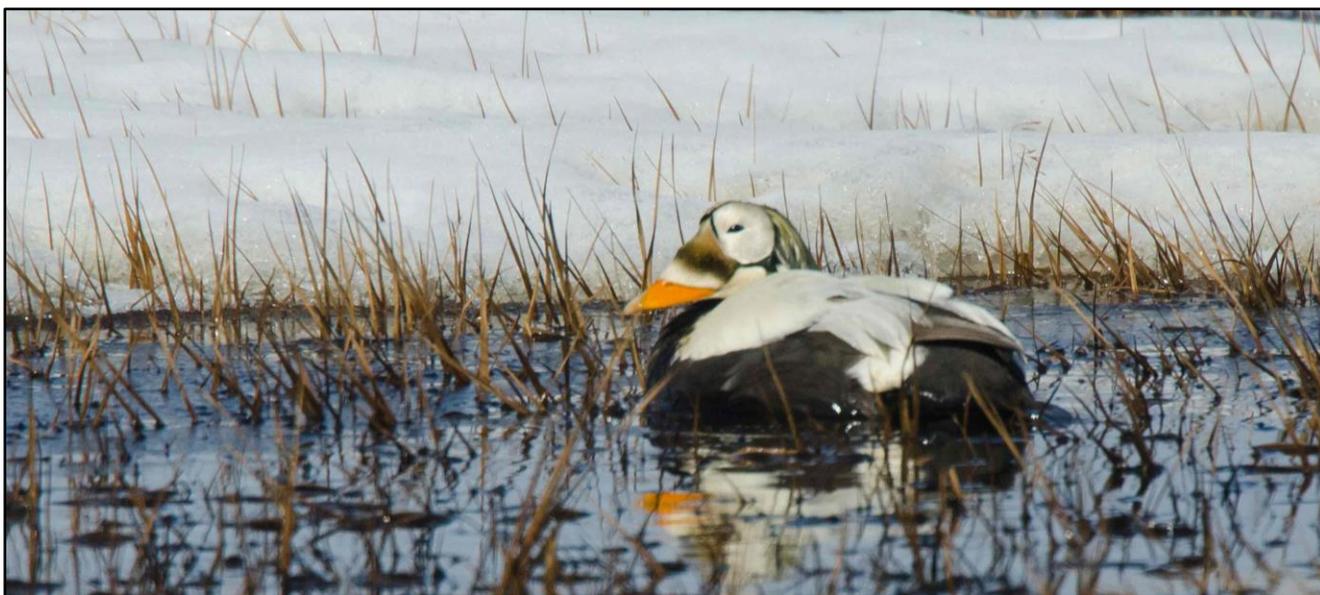
we'll enjoy dinner and of course there is no shortage of daylist here at this season, so there is the option to do some birding thereafter. This evening we could even stumble upon Spectacled or even Steller's Eiders, while we can also expect to see some of the region's commoner species. Shorebirds abound in Utqiagvik, including oodles of the lovely Red Phalarope, and sometimes Baird's, and, possibly, White-rumped or even Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Pectoral Sandpipers are transformed here on the breeding grounds, scarcely recognizable, and in breeding display they cruise low over the tundra, their bellies jiggling ridiculously. If the lemming year is good, Snowy Owls and Pomarine Skuas (Jaegers) become abundant. Many are the sights and sounds of stark, bleak, magical Utqiagvik. We shall thrill at our first steps afield tonight and again tomorrow.

Day 3: Birding Utqiagvik. Following an early breakfast this morning, we'll explore all the roads around town, looking for the local specialities and sometimes even strays and vagrants are found taking cover in the buildings or cemeteries in Utqiagvik. There are only about 50 miles of roads in the area, so we'll be able to cover them multiple times, and this allows us a great chance to see the many specialities and also to give us a chance and anything else unusual that might visit this northernmost point in the United States. It's generally too wet to walk through the tundra so we'll mostly birds roadside, and will also spend some time at Freshwater Lake, and then



Red Phalarope by Forrest Rowland





Spectacled Eider by Forrest Rowland

drive out along the pipeline road for about 20 miles. Some days it is possible to see all four eider species, or dozens of Snowy Owls. Indeed the name Utqiagvik comes from the Inupiat name for this location, which translates to “the place where snowy owls are hunted.” Our hunting will be from behind the lenses of our binoculars and cameras, and hopefully chance shall smile upon us, with nice numbers of this mythical arctic owl.

Day 4: All day birding; evening flight to Anchorage. Following another hearty early breakfast, we’ll check out and store our luggage, then spending the rest of the day enjoying the birds of Utqiagvik, looking for scarce shorebirds, and perhaps even rarities such as Red-necked Stint or Curlew Sandpiper. To do so, we’ll drive the road systems again, checking the lakes and melt ponds, as well as any open water along the shoreline. After another productive day in the field, we will depart from Utqiagvik at about 20:00 and



Horned Puffin by Stephan Lorenz

return to Anchorage at about 23:00 (flight times subject to change). Thankfully, we enjoy a leisurely drive to Seward the following day, and so can sleep in a bit.

Day 5: Depart for Seward. We depart this morning after breakfast for Seward. We might make stops at Westchester Lagoon or Potter’s Marsh to look for Horned Grebe and Rusty Blackbird, or along Turnagain Arm to search for Beluga Whales and Mountain Goats. Other birds that can be found en route include an incredible array of species particular to what is considered Pacific Northwest Rain Forest. Species possible include Hermit and Swainson’s Thrushes, Pine Grosbeak, Townsend’s Warbler, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Sooty Fox Sparrow, and the stunning Steller’s Jay. We will check into our accommodations near Seward’s



quaint harbour area. Thereafter, we will enjoy a couple of hours at the Sealife Center in Seward. The exhibits are great, and they have many seabirds. We'll round off the day with another great dinner, this time at a local eatery called Apollo's.

Day 6: Full day boat trip into Kenai Fjords NP. After a quick breakfast in town, we will head to Seward Boat Harbour to board a small boat. The only rough water we could experience might be a stretch of about 45 minutes into the Gulf of Alaska as we head to the Chiswell Islands, so if you think you need it, you should take motion sickness pills just after we board.



Killer Whale by Stephan Lorenz

The seas are usually moderate at most, but it's best to be prepared. We'll spend about 7 hours on the boat, with lunch on board. Birds we hope to see include nesting Bald Eagles, Horned and Tufted Puffins, Red-faced and Pelagic Cormorants, Parakeet and Rhinoceros Auklets, Marbled, Ancient and Kittlitz's Murrelets, and Black Oystercatcher. If lucky, we might also see Sooty or Short-tailed Shearwaters and Fork-tailed Storm Petrel. Marine mammals are abundant and we hope for sightings of Humpback and Killer Whales (Orca), Steller's Sea Lions and Dall Porpoise. Following what should be an exciting and rewarding day, we'll then enjoy dinner at Ray's, famous for their exquisite cedar plank salmon. Tonight is our final night together, as some may fly the same night tomorrow when we return to Anchorage. We will toast the great birds and even better company, and look forward to a final day of birding together.



Kittlitz's Murrelets by Stephan Lorenz

Day 7: Depart for Anchorage where the tour will conclude. After an early morning check out of our cabins, we will do a bit of final birding around Seward for Rufous Hummingbird, Northwestern Crow, and Pacific Wren. Or if time permits we may whisk into Westchester Lagoon, back in Anchorage. Here one often finds Hudsonian Godwits and Short-billed Dowitchers in breeding plumage along with nesting Red-necked Grebes. Other expected species could include Arctic Tern, Mew and Bonaparte's Gulls, Greater Scaup and many others, and nesting Pacific Loons can be found in the Anchorage area too.

Upon our arrival back to Anchorage our tour concludes and we will bid a fond farewell to one another, and perhaps even begin to plan our next birding adventure together.



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:**Utqiagvik & Kenai**

- Roundtrip flights: Anchorage to Utqiagvik;
- Pickup and drop-off at Utqiagvik Airport;
- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 7;
- 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.

Tiping: 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

Utqiagvik & Kenai

The tour will commence in at our hotel in Anchorage with our first dinner together at 18:30 on day 1. The tour will conclude by 1630. in Anchorage on day 7. 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 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.**

