

Gustavus Bird Sightings
March - May, 2011

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I was out of the area from 5 through 18 April. On 10 May, I had my first trip into Glacier Bay as a National Park Service marine mammal observer aboard cruise ships and began regular trips up bay on 15 May. -NKD

Bruce Paige returned to Gustavus on May 5.

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Brant

Eight on 20 April near town were the first reported. -NKD

Brant were then seen regularly through the end of the period, usually on beaches around town, with counts over one hundred on eleven days from 30 April to 29 May. -BBP, NKD, MDS

The high count was three hundred fifty on 6 May east of town. -BBP

Twenty-five were also seen on 26 and 30 May near the top of Glacier Bay's west arm. -NKD

Cackling Goose

One on 22 April east of town was the first reported. -NKD

Cackling Geese were seen regularly in the Gustavus area from 29 April to 29 May. -NKD, BBP

The high count was **seventy** on 29 April along the Salmon River in town. -NKD The previous high count was 40 in May 2010 -BBP from Ebird

Eurasian Wigeon

Single birds on 27 March, 4 and 19 April, 1, 14, 16, 18, 19, and 20 May in the Gustavus area. -BBP, NKD

Four on 27 April east of town. -NKD

Two on 30 April east of town. -NKD

Canvasback

One on 14 May west of town. -BBP, NKD

Two on 20, 21, and 22 May near the airport. -BBP, NKD

Black Scoter

The wintering Black Scoters remained well into the period along the beach west of town. At least four hundred on 12 and 24 March. -NKD

Three hundred seventy on 19 April.-NKD
At least two hundred on 1 May. -NKD

Hooded Merganser

One on 12-14 May near the airport. -BBP, NKD

Yellow-billed Loon

One or two Yellow-billed Loons were seen on a number of dates through the period near town and in Glacier Bay. -NKD, BBP

Four on 15 May near the beginning of Glacier Bay's west arm. -NKD

Five on 17 May in Glacier Bay' west arm. -NKD

Nine on 22 May near the beginning of Glacier Bay's west arm with six together. -NKD

Osprey

One on 23 April on the outer coast of Chichagof Island at White Sulphur Hotsprings. -PBSV

One on 22 May in mid Glacier Bay. -NKD

One on 28 May north of town. -BBP

Rough-legged Hawk

None reported.

Merlin

Heard and seen calling repeatedly on 21 March at Bartlett Cove at the location where Merlins have nested in past years. -Tom VandenBerg and MDS

There have been no reports of Merlins at that location since.

Peregrine Falcon

Two on 15 March from the state ferry with one off Lemesurier Island and one in Pelican.-NKD

One on 1 May west of town. -NKD

Two on 6 May east of town. One caught a Western Sandpiper and was joined by a second peregrine. They flew east towards Excursion Ridge. -NKD

One on 13 and 17 May. -BBP from Ebird

One on 21 May west of town. -NKD

Shorebird high counts

Wintering shorebirds continued until at least mid March.

Two hundred seventy Rock Sandpipers were west of town on 12 March.

About three thousand Dunlin with about two hundred Sanderlings were west of town on 19 March.

Shorebird migration peaked in late April.

Ten thousand birds were estimated on 27 April and twenty thousand on 30 April on the beach far east of town. Most of these birds were Western Sandpipers and Dunlin. -NKD

Black-bellied Plover

One on 24 March west of town was the first reported. -NKD
Numbers peaked in late April with an estimated three hundred on 27 April and an estimated **eight hundred** on 30 April with the large shorebird flocks east of town on those dates. -NKD (The previous high count was five hundred in May 2010. -BBP)
Four hundred on 1 May west of town. -BBP

American Golden-Plover

One on 7 May west of town. -BBP
Two on 13 May in town. -NKD
Five on 14 May in town. -BBP, NKD
Three on 18 May in town. -NKD

Pacific Golden-Plover

One on 23 April west of town. -NKD
One on 27 April east of town. -NKD
One on 1 May east of town. -MDS
One on 12 May in town. -NKD

Hudsonian Godwit

None reported. I started compiling these reports in 2003, and this is the first spring without a Hudsonian Godwit. -NKD

Marbled Godwit

Nine on 30 April east of town was a new high count for the area. -NKD
(The previous high count was six in May 2006. -NKD)
One on 1 and 5 May in town. -NKD, BBP

Red Knot

Five on 1 May west of town. -NKD
One of these knots was banded and had been banded on 10 March 2011 "at Upper Gulf (Delta del Colorado) on the beach of the Golfo de Santa Clara Town (31°40'39.01"N; 114°29'36.65"O) and was an adult bird." -Victor Alaya Perez
One on 16 May west of town. -NKD

Glaucous-winged Gull

One banded bird on 22 March near Gustavus. -NKD
"Female banded as an adult on July 8, 1999. During those years she nested on the small islet at the south end of South Marble." -Stephani Zador (South Marble Island in Glacier Bay.)
One banded bird on 23 May on South Marble Island in Glacier Bay. -Brendan Moynahan
"I banded it on 7/12/1999 as an adult male. That makes him at least 15 years old. During that and the following year, he nested in an area I called "Upper Castle", which is about mid-way down the east side of South Marble. -Stephani Zador
This bird was sighted and photographed in 2011 at the same location on the island where it was banded in 1999. -Brendan Moynahan

Glaucous Gull

One immature bird on 24 March west of town. -NKD

Caspian Tern

One on 23 April on the outer coast of Chichagof Island at White Sulphur Hot Springs. -PBSV

One on 1 May west of town. -NKD

One on 2 May east of town. -NKD

Two on 7 May west of town. -NKD, BBP

Two on 17 May east of town. -BBP

One on 24 May near town. -BBP

Horned Puffin

Three on 22 May below the cliffs at Margerie Glacier in Glacier Bay where they are seen in small numbers through the summer. -NKD

Two on 24 and 26 May in the lower part of Glacier Bay. -NKD

Three on 31 May in Tarr Inlet at the top of Glacier Bay's west arm. -NKD

Eurasian Collared-Dove

A minimum of two were seen and heard regularly through March and April in town at the same location where they wintered. -MDS, LMR, and others.

During May only one dove was seen regularly at this location. -LMR, BBP, and others

Two were there on 27 May. -MDS

Great Horned Owl

Three on 5 March in town. -Tom Vandenberg

One on 6 and 23 March in town. -MDS

One on 15 March west of town in the Good River area. -Paul Barnes

One over the first half of March in the Rink Creek area east of town. -Wayne Clark

Northern Pygmy-Owl

One on 17 March and 4 April in Bartlett Cove at the same location where one was during the winter. -MDS

One west of my cabin in town on 4, 5, 7, 14, 17, 20, and 25 March, 2 April, and 8 May. -NKD

One, possibly two, in the Good River neighborhood heard regularly from 3 March through at least 19 April. -Hank Lentfer, Paul Barnes, Kim Heacox, and others

Barred Owl

One on 14 May in the Rink Creek area east of town. -Rachel Chunn

One on 25 May in north Gustavus. -PBSV

Short-eared Owl

One on 27, 28, and 29 March and 2 and 16 April in town. -EHJ, MDS, LMT

One on 1 May west of town. -NKD

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Saw-whet owls nested in a nest box near my cabin. This was the sixth time saw-whet owls have nested in boxes in Gustavus since 2006. This year's nest was the fifth on this property and the third in this particular box. In 2009 saw-whet owls started to nest in this box, but the female was killed before any eggs were laid. In 2007 saw-whet owls nested in a box .7 miles almost due west of these boxes at the Sharman's house.

Hooting was first heard on 7 March and was heard almost nightly until 18 March.

The male was never heard hooting after 18 March.

On 17 March I replaced a nest box camera that had been damaged by squirrels. I had limited camera images from inside the box starting 17 March.

On 17 March the female was first observed in the box at night with the male delivering food to her. (Note that I am assuming which is male and which is female.)

The female was in the box nightly after 17 March.

The female was first observed in the box during the day on 24 March and she remained there.

The first egg was laid on 31 March. Five eggs were eventually laid.

The first egg hatched on or slightly before 28 April. All five eggs eventually hatched.

Apart from brief periods outside the box, the female remained in the box, usually on the chicks, presumably until I first noticed her leave the box for an extended period on 22 May. Five chicks were visible on 22 May.

On 23 May the female was back in the box on the chicks. She left in the evenings on 23 and 24 May and was back in the box during the days.

On 25 May the female left the box at about 1:00 p.m. and was not seen in the box again.

It was not clear when, but sometime after 22 May one of the chicks must have died. I never saw more than four after that. The camera image only shows a portion of the inside of the box, so it was difficult to know if I was seeing all the chicks in the image.

On 31 May there were still four chicks in the box.

(Note: all four chicks fledged in early June. I climbed the tree and looked in the box on 16 June. There was no evidence of a dead chick.) -NKD

Vaux's Swift

Three on 21 May in town. -NKD

American Three-toed Woodpecker

One on 12 March in town. -NKD

Two on 23 April in town. -MDS

One on 14 May in town. -BBP

One on 30 May in Bartlett Cove. -MDS

(Note: These are probably all different birds.)

Olive-sided Flycatcher

One on 26 May near the airport. -BBP

Western Wood-Pewee

Two on 13 May near the airport. -BBP

One on 22 May northwest of town. -BBP

One on 23 May north of town. -BBP

Horned Lark

One on 1 May west of town. -NKD

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Two came to my feeder in town through the period. I suspected they were nesting, but never saw young. -NKD

Swainson's Thrush

One on 28 May on Pleasant Island near Gustavus. -NKD Swainson's Thrush is rare around Gustavus, although it is more common in parts of Glacier Bay.

European Starling

None reported.

Rusty Blackbird

Fifteen on 6 March in town. -NKD

Six on 26 March in town. -NKD

Finches

The high number of **Pine Siskins**, **White-winged Crossbills**, and **Red Crossbills** from this winter continued into the spring. **Common Redpolls** showed up in large numbers in early March. By late March, there were still lots of vocal Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls around town, but the crossbills were not as vocal. Redpolls had thinned out by late April. Both Red and White-winged crossbills were seen and heard regularly through May in small numbers. Pine Siskins continued to be abundant through May.

It was evident that all four species were breeding in the Gustavus area. A Pine Siskin was seen on a nest from 12 March to 2 April. Another siskin was building a nest on 27 March. Juvenile siskins were common from late April through May. Juvenile Red Crossbills and juvenile White-winged Crossbills were also seen regularly from late April through May.

More unusual were fledgling Common Redpolls being fed by adults on 20 and 21 May northwest of Gustavus. Common Redpolls nest in the scrubby upper portions of Glacier Bay, but I did not know they also nested around Gustavus. -NKD