

Gustavus/Glacier Bay Bird Sightings
June-July 2012

Nat Drumheller, natdrumheller@hotmail.com

This was one of the coldest and wettest summers on record after a record breaking cold and wet May. Nesting was likely difficult for many species under these conditions. Songbirds were scarce around Gustavus during July and there were not large concentrations of murrelets and gulls in lower Glacier Bay usually seen during summer. There was evidence that gulls and terns nesting in Glacier Bay had little success. Researchers found abandoned and predated gull nests on islands in the bay and few chicks. The Black-legged Kittiwake colony at Margerie Glacier failed. The Caspian Tern colony at Icy Bay on the outer coast above Yakutat failed.

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

Contributors: Marylou Blakeslee (MB), Kelsey Brasseur (KB), Nat Drumheller (NKD), Melissa Etheridge (ME), Emma Johnson (EHJ), Tania Lewis (TML), Andrea Markell (AM), Ian Miles (IM), Barbara Morford (BM), Emily Mount (ECM), Carlos Navarro, Janet Neilson (JN), Bruce Paige (BBP), Gretchen Pederson, Pete Pederson, Larry Platt (LMP), Laurie Ross (LMR), Jim Saracco (JFS)

Greater White-fronted Goose

One on 9 June east of town. -BBP

Brant

Brant were seen regularly through June and early July along Gustavus beaches and in Glacier Bay. Some high counts:

One hundred and fifty-five on 3 June east of town. -BBP

One hundred and seventy-six on 9 June east of town. -BBP

One hundred on 11 June west of town. -NKD

Thirty-six on 21 June in Tarr Inlet at the top of Glacier Bay. -NKD

Three on 11 July east of town were the last reported. -BBP

Cackling Goose

Sixteen on 1 June west of town. -BBP

One on 29 June on the Salmon River. -NKD

There are only one or two prior summer records for Gustavus/Glacier Bay.

Tundra Swan

One from 22 June through the end of July at the mouth of the Bartlett River in Bartlett Cove. -TML, BM, and others

Prior to this there were no certain summer records for Tundra Swan in Glacier Bay.

There was a swan in Adams inlet 12 July 1959 (Wik and Streveler) and four summer records of swans from the 1960s (Bruce Paige). According to Paige, Tundra Swans were more likely than Trumpeter Swans in those years.



This Cackling Goose near the Salmon River on 29 June 2012 is one of few summer records for the area. Photo by Nat Drumheller.



Present at the Bartlett River from 22 June through the end of July 2012, this Tundra Swan provided the first confirmed summer record for the area. Photo by Barbara Morford.

Ring-necked Duck

One on 6 July and four on 7 July near the airport. -BBP, NKD

Black Scoter

Five on 30 June in Tarr Inlet at the top of Glacier Bay. -NKD

Long-tailed Duck

Small numbers were seen regularly through June in Glacier Bay, usually near the top of the west arm.

Some high counts were ten on 6 June, fifty on 8 June, and thirty-two on 14 June. -NKD

Nine on 1 July, four on 12 July, and one on 18 July were in Tarr Inlet. These were the only observations from July. -NKD

Yellow-billed Loon

Three on 3 June with two in Bartlett Cove and one in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD

One on 6 June in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD

Two on 14 June with one in mid Glacier Bay and one in the west arm. -NKD

One on 26 June in Bartlett Cove. -NKD

One on 18 July in Tarr Inlet in Glacier Bay. -NKD

One on 26 July in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD

One on 15, 20, and 21 July east of Gustavus. -BBP

Red-necked Grebe

Two on 6 June in the west arm of Glacier Bay. -NKD

One on 19 July west of town. -BBP

One on 28 July west of town. -NKD

Sooty Shearwater

Although common in summer in Glacier Bay National Park waters outside the bay, Sooty Shearwaters are rarely seen inside the bay. So one in the upper west arm of Glacier Bay on 26 June was a good find. -EHJ and four naturalists on a National Geographic tour vessel.

Northern Harrier

One on 8 July west of town. -NKD

One on 13 and 31 July near the Salmon River. -BBP

Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk

One on 14 and 16 July in town. -NKD, MB

A different bird on 15 July near Bartlett Cove along the park road. -MB, NKD

Merlin

One on 19 June and 8 July in town. -NKD

One on 20 July east of town. -BBP



Marylou Blakeslee found this Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk along the park road on 15 July 2012. Photo by Nat Drumheller.

Peregrine Falcon

One on 6 June near the Margerie Glacier at the top of Glacier Bay. -IM, NKD
One on 25 July east of town. -BBP

Sandhill Crane

One to two were heard occasionally through June and into early July east of town where they have been suspected of nesting in recent years. -TL, BBP and others
One to two were also heard from late June through July west of town in the State Crane Flats. -LMP, BBP, and others
It was not clear how many cranes were at Gustavus over the summer, but four were seen on 2 August over town (LMR).

Shorebirds

Shorebirds were on the move through Gustavus earlier than normal. Some species, such as Semipalmated Sandpiper and Hudsonian Godwit, were more numerous than usual for the summer months. -BBP, NKD

Killdeer

One on 19 June at the airport. -NKD

Black-bellied Plover

Four on 29 June and one on 4 July west of the Salmon River. -NKD, BBP
Five on 29 June, two on 18 July, and one on 25 July east of town. -BBP

Whimbrel

Seven on 1 June west of town. -BBP

Seven on 11 June with one near town and six at Point Gustavus. -JFS, NKD

One on 18 and 19 June near town. -NKD, BBP

Hudsonian Godwit

One on 29 and 30 June at the mouth of the Salmon River. -NKD, BBP

Six on 11 July east of town. -NKD

Three on 19 July west of town. -BBP

Three on 28 July east of town. -BBP

Ruddy Turnstone

Three on 8 July west of town. -NKD

Surfbird

Up to twelve were seen through the period at Russell Island in the west arm of Glacier Bay by researchers stationed there. -ME, KB

Thirty-five on 18 July east of town. -BBP

Sanderling

Eight on 5 June and thirty on 9 June west of town. -NKD

Sixty on 14 July, twenty-one on 18 July, and forty-five on 25 July east of town. -NKD, BBP

Semipalmated Sandpiper

One to ten were seen regularly from 29 June through the end of the period along Gustavus beaches with flocks of Least and Western Sandpipers. -BBP, NKD, JFS

High counts were fifty on 11 July and twenty on 14 July. -NKD, BBP

Western Sandpiper

Western Sandpipers were seen regularly from 29 June through the end of the period along Gustavus beaches. -BBP, NKD, JFS

High counts were 2,000 on 5 July, 780 on 10 July, and 400 on 14 July. -NKD, BBP

Baird's Sandpiper

One on 29 July and seven on 31 July east of town. -BBP

Pectoral Sandpiper

One on 4 and 28 July west of town. -NKD

One on 1 July and fourteen on 10 July east of town. -BBP

Two on 31 July near the Salmon River. -BBP

Dunlin

One on 5 July east of town. -BBP

Two on 12 July west of town. -BBP



A Semipalmated Sandpiper on the Salmon River on 5 July 2012. Photo by Nat Drumheller.



Bruce Paige photographed this Baird's Sandpiper east of Gustavus on 29 July 2012.

Ruff

One on 9 July on the beach east of town with other shorebirds. -BBP

This is the second record for Glacier Bay with the first being 31 August 2006. This is the first summer record for southeast Alaska.



Only the second ever in Gustavus/Glacier Bay and the first summer record for southeast Alaska, this Ruff (top) was east of town on 9 July 2012.

Photo by Bruce Paige.

Short-billed Dowitcher

Five on 11 July east of town. -NKD

One on 16 July near the town dock. -NKD

Long-billed Dowitcher

One to sixteen were seen regularly from 15 June through the end of the period along rivers near town. -BBP, NKD

Sabine's Gull

Six on 8 June in lower Glacier Bay. -NKD

One on 3 July along the Salmon River. -NKD

Two on 6 July in lower Glacier Bay. -NKD

Franklin's Gull

One on 6 June near the Margerie Glacier at the top of Glacier Bay. -IM, NKD

This is the fourth record for Glacier Bay. There are two prior summer records, both from Margerie Glacier, and one fall record from the mouth of the bay.

California Gull

Small numbers were seen regularly along Gustavus beaches from 7 June through the rest of the period. -NKD, BBP, JFS

High counts were ten on 11 July and at least fifteen on 14 July. -BBP, NKD



This Franklin's Gull at Margerie Glacier on 6 June 2012 was the fourth record for Glacier Bay. Photo by Ian Miles.

Thayer's Gull

One to a few were seen through the period near town in mixed gull flocks. -NKD

Glaucous Gull

An immature Glaucous Gull was seen regularly from 14 June through the end of the period near the mouth of the Salmon River. -JFS, BBP, NKD

Two were west of the Salmon River on 18 June. -NKD

Aleutian Tern

One to three were seen regularly through June to mid July below the entrance to the west arm of Glacier Bay. Five were there on 13 and 18 July. -NKD

Caspian Tern

Record numbers of Caspian Terns were in the area through the period. The largest numbers were along Gustavus beaches. They were also seen at Bartlett Cove and in Glacier Bay on numerous dates. Michelle Kissling (USFWS) said the Caspian Tern colony at Icy Bay failed this year. That might be part of the reason why there were so many terns at Gustavus and Glacier Bay, but numbers have been steadily increasing in recent years.

At least ten different banded terns from the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington were seen in Gustavus this summer. Yasuko Suzuki (OSU) provided banding information on these birds.

Since few bird reports come from the east arm of Glacier Bay it is worth noting two Caspian Terns on 3 July over the Casement Glacier outwash. -EHJ

Some high counts from Gustavus: more than fifty on 29 June, seventy-five on 11 July, and thirty on 28 July. -NKD, BBP

On 5 July Bruce Paige counted sixty-four east of town and Nat Drumheller counted over forty west of town. Although the terns might have moved and been counted twice, it seems likely there were over 100 terns in the area given the high numbers seen at single locations on other dates.

The previous high counts for Caspian Terns were forty-one adults on 15 July 2011 and thirty-two adults with ten juveniles on 30 August 2007.

Black Tern

A Black Tern was seen in mid Glacier Bay on 27 June by Gretchen Pederson, Pete Pederson, and Carlos Navarro, naturalists on the National Geographic tour vessel Sea Bird. Carlos Navarro photographed the bird nicely.

The Black Tern was seen again on 28 June in lower Glacier Bay. -NKD, EHJ

This is the first record for Black Tern in Glacier Bay and the third for southeast Alaska.



Definitely the hottest bird of the summer, this Black Tern was photographed in Glacier Bay on 27 June 2012 by Carlos Navarro providing the first record for Gustavus/Glacier Bay and the third record for southeast Alaska.

Parasitic Jaeger

A Parasitic Jaeger nest was observed with attending jaegers in mid June near the Reid Glacier at a traditional nesting spot. -AM

Leucistic Marbled Murrelet

Janet Neilson photographed a white Marbled Murrelet on 19 June in Icy Strait near the mouth of Idaho Inlet. Janet Neilson also photographed a white Marbled Murrelet on 19 August 2002 in lower Glacier Bay, and one was photographed in 2009 in Glacier Bay by murrelet researchers.



The white Marbled Murrelet photographed in Icy Strait on 19 June 2012 by Janet Neilson.

Kittlitz's Murrelet

On 6 June there was a noticeable increase in Kittlitz's Murrelet numbers in the upper west arm of Glacier Bay with hundreds visible on the water off Composite Island. Numbers in the hundreds were seen regularly in the upper west arm through mid July with over five-hundred Kittlitz's Murrelets in Tarr Inlet on 17 and 20 June. -NKD

Horned Puffin

Small numbers were seen in Glacier Bay through the period by multiple people. The maximum reported was ten on 14 June. -NKD

Eurasian Collared-Dove

Eurasian Collared-Doves were reported from all parts of town and Bartlett Cove through the period by many people. The maximum number was six on 21 July east of town. -BBP
A nest was suspected in town and juvenile doves were reported at a residence with multiple doves frequenting a feeder, but this was not confirmed. -LMR
A single Eurasian Collared-Dove was seen flying across lower Glacier Bay on 21 June. -NKD

Barred Owl

One on 1 July near my cabin in town. -NKD

Short-eared Owl

One on 10 June near the airport. -NKD

Northern Saw-whet Owl

The Northern Saw-whet Owl that began hooting nightly in early April near my cabin in town continued hooting nightly until about June 21. Although it was seen in a nest box there, it apparently never found a mate. This was not for lack of effort. -NKD

American Three-toed Woodpecker

One on 2 July near town. -BBP

One on 29 July near my cabin in town. -NKD

Olive-sided Flycatcher

One on 1 and 4 June at Bartlett Cove. -NKD, BBP

One on 4 June singing in a bog east of Rink Creek where they have been heard singing in past years. -NKD

A pair with three fledglings on 22 July east of Rink Creek on the Falls Creek road. -BBP

Western Wood-Pewee

One on 8 June in north Gustavus. -JFS

Alder Flycatcher

The first birds of the season were observed on 4 June. -BBP, NKD

Warbling Vireo

One on 8 June in north Gustavus. -JFS

One on 18 June along the park road northwest of town. -NKD

These follow one on 28 May near the airport. The first record was only in May 2010.

European Starling

One to two juveniles from 30 June to 7 July near the Salmon River. -BBP, NKD, JFS

Four juveniles on 16 July near the town dock. -NKD

Cedar Waxwing

Two on 18 June along the park road northwest of town. -NKD

A few on 22 June in town. -ECM

Two from 14 July through the end of the period at a pond near the airport. These birds were possibly nesting in the area. Both were adults and one was feeding the other on 14 and 19 July. -NKD, BBP

Thirteen adults on 31 July at the same pond near the airport. -BBP

Common Yellowthroat

One on 7 June was the first of the season. -BBP

Western Tanager

One on 17 and 18 June along the park road northwest of town. -NKD, BBP

Western Tanager is very rare in Gustavus and Glacier Bay, unlike other parts of southeast Alaska.

Red Crossbill

Two on 16 June west of town were the first for the period. -NKD

Small numbers from 23 June through the rest of the period were around town and in Bartlett Cove. -NKD, BBP

The high count was forty-five on 29 July. -BBP

White-winged Crossbill

One on 23 June in town was the first for the period. Small numbers began showing up in town in early July. White-winged Crossbills became common from 14 July through the rest of the month with flocks of fifty or more being seen regularly around Gustavus and at Bartlett Cove. -NKD

Pine Siskin

Small numbers in early June gradually increased through the month until they were common around Gustavus and Bartlett Cove from mid June through July. -NKD



These Cedar Waxwings frequented a brush patch at a pond near the airport for the second half of July 2012. Photographed here on 14 July by Nat Drumheller.