

BARROW ALASKA EXTENSION

JUNE 16-19, 2018

This short, 3-day extension to Barrow will give participants a chance to see breeding plumaged Steller's, Spectacled and King Eiders, as well as Red Phalarope and possibly Yellow-billed Loons. All of these are possible during the main tour, but the chances of seeing any of them are small since they breed in the high arctic and by June have almost entirely departed from the other places that we will visit in Alaska.

Saturday-Sunday June 16-17, Day 1-2: Those participating in the extension will have an early breakfast at our Anchorage hotel before departing to the airport for a mid-morning flight to Barrow. Upon arrival in Barrow we will check into our hotel, pickup our van and begin exploring the 3 shorts roads leading from town into the surrounding tundra. The areas around Barrow are a unique eco-system quite unlike any of the venues on the main tour. Situated more than 300 miles above the Arctic Circle at more than 71 degrees north, Barrow indeed sits at the top of the world...or at least the top of the world we can easily access in North America! The topography is flat and barren and pock marked with many shallow pools, a result of melting ice and standing water unable to seep through the permafrost. Barrow is a land of extremes where the sun isn't seen for 67 consecutive days during the winter! Fortunately, during our visit the opposite extreme will prevail and we will have essentially 24 hours of daylight. The weather can also be extreme, even in mid-June and temperatures in the 20's are likely with windy conditions being routine. Though this may sound like an inhospitable environment for any living creature, it is home to a highly sought after suite of birds that use this alien environment to breed and raise their young. Barrow is famous to birders as "the place" to see eiders in breeding plumage and the timing of our visit will give us excellent chances to Spectacled, Steller's and King eiders decked out in their colorful breeding garb. Striking Red Phalaropes also dot the shallow tundra pools along with their more widespread cousins, Red-necked Phalaropes.

In the native tongue, Barrow is called Utqiagvik, which means "the place we hunt snowy owls." Though the population of these beautiful white owls rises and falls based on lemming numbers, there are always a few around Barrow even in poor lemming years and we can expect to find some in our forays. Barrow is also the breeding grounds for Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers, with the booming display flight of the Pectoral being a unique and memorable experience. In some years Buff-breasted Sandpiper are also present and rarities like Ruff and Red-necked Stint are always possible.

Other birds that are regular around Barrow in June are Brant, Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose, Long-tailed Duck, Pacific Loon, Red-throated Loon, Pomarine Jaeger, Glaucous Gull, American Golden-Plover, Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur and

Common and Hoary redpoll. Though they are decidedly uncommon, Yellow-billed Loons are also regularly recorded on June trips. Night in Barrow.

Monday June 18, Day 3: After a final full day in Barrow, we will board an early evening flight back to Anchorage where we will comply our final bird list and have dinner together. Night in Anchorage.

Tuesday June 19, Day 4: Participants can book flights home at any time today.

COST

The price for this extension is \$1800 and includes round trip airfare between Anchorage and Barrow, ground transportation and guide service in Barrow, 2 nights lodging in Barrow (June 16-17), 1 night lodging in Anchorage (June 18), and all meals through dinner on June 18. A single supplement of \$300 will be charged for people wishing to room alone or for whom I cannot find a roommate.

DEPOSIT & REGISTRATION

A deposit of \$600 and a completed registration form will be required to secure a place on this tour. Checks should be made payable to Otus asio Tours and mailed to Jan Hansen at 900 Hillsborough Road in Chapel Hill NC 27516.

INFORMATION

For more information contact Jan Hansen at 919-259-9423 or at otusasiotours@gmail.com.