

# ALASKA



June 10 - 20, 2023



*Wild* **LATITUDES**  
WORLDWIDE NATURE TOURS

# ALASKA

## Birding and Natural History

Greetings, Fellow Explorer!

We've put together a great tour to Alaska that showcases many natural highlights of the state. This itinerary is perfect for first-time visitors to Alaska, but also for returning nature lovers who want to see and learn more about this fascinating place.

Our focus will be birding as well as wildlife watching, with some geology and ecology in the mix. Our opportunities to see birds and mammals will be excellent. We'll explore several major ecosystems across Alaska, including rugged coastlines, boreal forests, and subarctic tundra. Many bird species breed and nest in the habitats that we'll visit. And the long hours of sunlight encourage birds and mammals to be active almost around the clock.

Some special birds we'll be looking for include Horned Puffin, Willow Ptarmigan, Long-tailed Jaeger, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Bluethroat, and Arctic Warbler. Mammalian megafauna that we hope to see are Moose, Grizzly Bear, Dall Sheep, Caribou, Sea Otter, and more.

The tour will start in Fairbanks, and then we'll visit Denali National Park. We'll also explore the world-famous Denali Highway. Then we head down to the Kenai Peninsula, where we'll take a day-long boat ride into beautiful Kenai Fjords National Park.

Next, we fly from Anchorage to Nome, where we'll venture out on backroads to explore the subarctic tundra ecosystem. We'll have chances to find new bird species that breed in or migrate through this wild area. We're also likely to see some great mammals, such as Muskox. This tour will be an exciting, educational adventure all around!

We are opening this tour exclusively to members of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, so if you're interested, **please contact GGAS at [travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org)**



Steve Robertson and Ivan Phillipsen  
*Co-owners and Lead Guides at Wild Latitudes*

### TRIP DETAILS

**Start Date:** June 10, 2023

**Duration:** 11 days

**Number of participants:** Max of 12

**Price:** \$5,695 per person

**Deposit:** \$2,850 per person

**Single Supplement:** \$1,500

**Trip Leaders:** David Jaffe, Steve Backus

#### Included:

- Double-occupancy lodging
- Ground and water transportation
- Breakfasts and lunches
- Excursions and park fees
- Guiding services

#### Not Included:

- Flights
- Dinners
- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal items
- Optional gratuities for guides



## ITINERARY

*Tentative and subject to change depending on weather, road, or other conditions.*

### Day 1 - June 10 - Arrival in Fairbanks, AK

Welcome to the great state of Alaska! Your trip leaders **David Jaffe** and **Steve Backus** will meet the group at the airport, and then drive everyone to our nearby hotel. After checking in, we'll have a brief orientation meeting.

Our hotel this evening is surrounded by a 75-acre wildlife sanctuary and 2,000-acre migratory waterfowl refuge, creating an ideal place to experience the natural scenery on your first night in Alaska. There will hopefully be time to explore a bit before we enjoy our first dinner together.

Lodging: Wedgewood Resort

### Day 2 - June 11 - Birding around Fairbanks

This morning we'll walk from the hotel to the Wedgewood Wildlife Sanctuary, in search of birds like **Boreal chickadee**, **Bohemian Waxwing**, and **White-winged Crossbill**. We may also stop by the Alaska Bird Observatory, to check the feeders. Our last stop in

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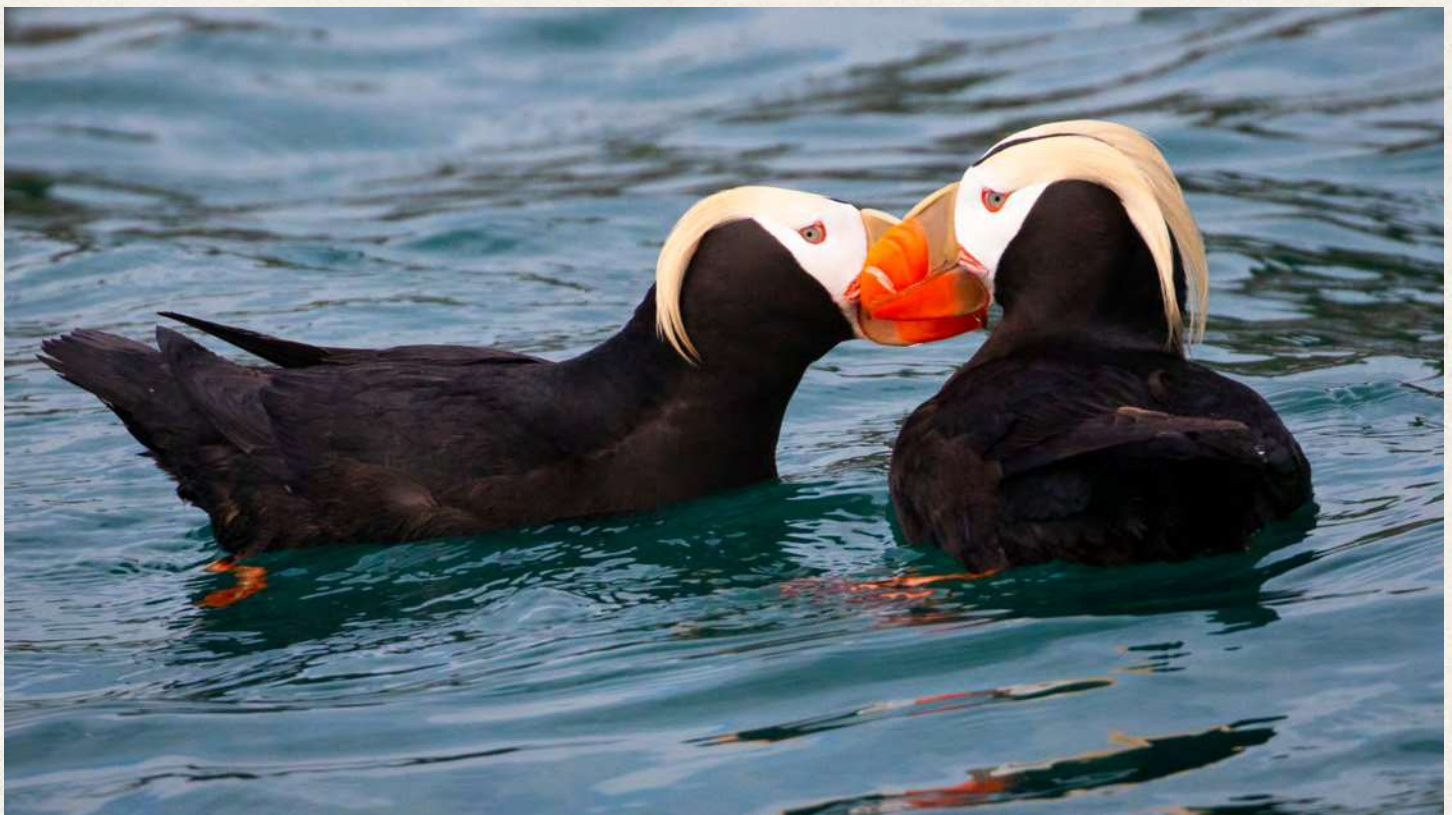
Fairbanks will be Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, undoubtedly the best-known birding locations in Fairbanks. This is breeding habitat for large numbers of waterfowl and cranes. Due to the diversity of habitat including ponds, muskeg, mixed forest, and shrubland, this will give us a good opportunity to 'get our feet wet' with some of the local bird species.

We'll then drive south to the region just outside Denali National Park.

Lodging: [Denali Park Hotel](#)

## Day 3 - June 12 - Denali National Park

This is our big day of experiencing the wonders of Denali National Park. The only road in the park is almost entirely closed to private vehicles, so we'll ride the shuttle bus. We'll take the bus as far as we can\* into the park on an all-day adventure filled with fantastic scenery and wildlife. Stops on the way will allow us to eat lunch and stretch our legs and do some light birding. Some birds to



look for are **Golden Eagle, Willow Ptarmigan, Northern Shrike, and Gyrfalcon**. We'll have excellent chances of seeing **Brown Bears, Moose, Caribou, Dall Sheep**. Don't forget your camera today!

*\*Repair work on the road due to a landslide may allow us to get only as far as Mile 43.*

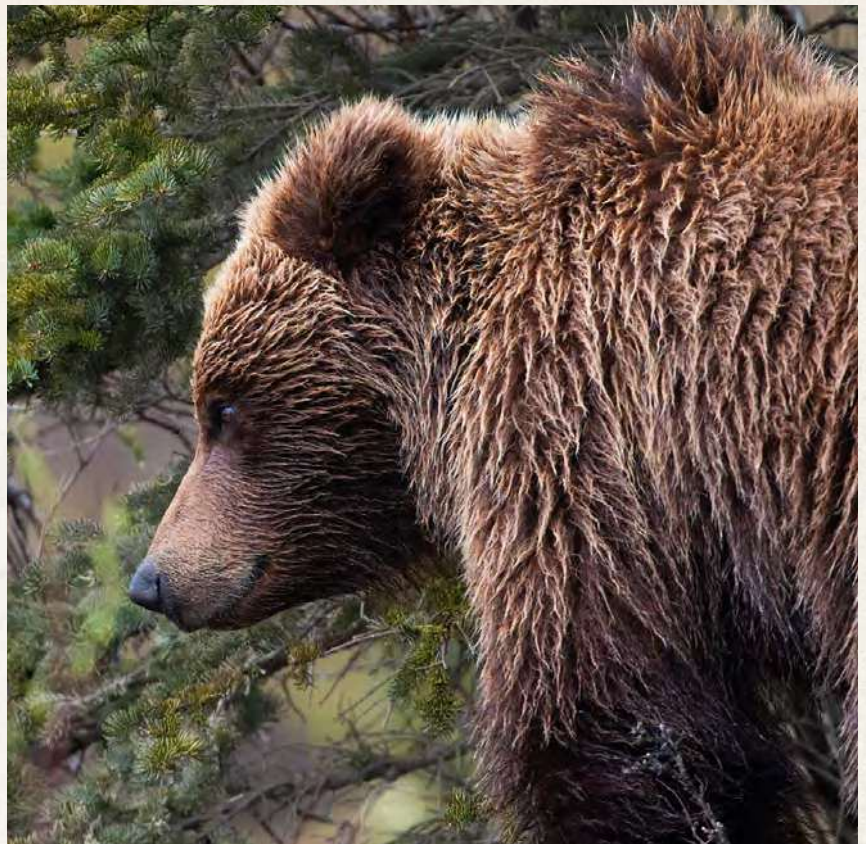
Lodging: Backwoods Lodge, Cantwell

## Day 4 - June 13 - Birding on the Denali Highway

Getting an early start this morning, we head for the Denali Highway. This is a mostly gravel road that stretches 135 miles from the edge of Denali National Park eastward to Paxson. It is one of the premier scenic drives of the world and is also great for birding! We'll explore the western end of the highway through boreal forest, riparian bush, and wetlands.

Bird highlights here may include **Long-tailed Jaeger, Northern Hawk Owl, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Arctic Warbler, Red-necked Phalarope, Merlin, Smith's Longspur**, and more. Big mammals will again be a possibility. Returning to the main highway, we may get good views of 20,310 ft Denali (formerly Mt McKinley), if the weather is clear.

Lodging: Backwoods Lodge, Cantwell





## Day 5 - June 14 - Head South to the Kenai Peninsula

After breakfast, we'll jump in our vans and drive south to the town of Seward on the Kenai Peninsula. We'll stop on the way to go for birding walks in forest, stream, and coastal habitats. Major stops include Potter Marsh and Tern Lake. A few species we hope to find include **Trumpeter Swan**, **Red-necked Grebe**, and **Spruce Grouse**. With luck, we'll see some more **Moose** and other big mammals today—maybe even **Beluga** whales!

Lodging: TBD

## Day 6 - June 15 - Cruising Kenai Fjords National Park

Get ready for an amazing day filled with birds, wildlife, and epic scenery! We'll have our own chartered boat for a whole day of exploring the coastal wilderness of Kenai Fjords National Park. With luck, we'll witness the spectacle of a huge tidewater glacier dropping icebergs into the sea with a thundering crash! Numerous bird species will be our targets today, including **Red-faced Cormorant**, **Rhinoceros Auklet**, **Marbled Murrelet**, and **Kittlitz's Murrelet**. We should get close looks at **Tufted** and **Horned Puffins** as well as **Black-legged Kittiwakes** at their nest colonies on isolated islands. We might also spot **Sea Otters**, **Steller Sea Lions**, **Humpback Whales**, and **Orca**.

Lodging: TBD

## Day 7 - June 16 - North to Anchorage

Today we leave Seward and head north to Anchorage. We'll visit multiple sites along the way, to explore and do some birding.

We spend the night in Anchorage, and should have some time to explore the city before dinner. Tomorrow morning we fly to Nome!

Lodging: Historic Anchorage Hotel

## Day 8 - June 17 - Fly to Nome and Local Birding

Our flight this morning transports us far to the west, to visit an entirely different environment. Nome feels like a frontier

## Our Commitment to Conservation

On every Wild Latitudes tour, we aim to make a positive conservation impact wherever we travel. We often utilize the services of local guides and stay in environmentally-sensitive, locally-owned lodges. On every trip, we make a donation to a local conservation effort that works to protect native species or ecosystems. When you travel with Wild Latitudes, you're helping to protect the wild regions you visit and the amazing species that call them home.





town. It's accessible only by boat and plane. We've left the boreal forest behind, and now find ourselves surrounded by wet tundra and shrub thickets. On our first day in the area, we'll hit local birding and wildlife hotspots outside of town. Birds we may find include **Long-tailed Duck**, **Red-throated Loon**, **Parasitic Jaeger**, **Lapland Longspur**, and **Eastern Yellow Wagtail**. We'll work on our bird and wildlife lists in the evening over a hearty meal, in preparation for the following two days of adventure.

Lodging: Aurora Inn

## Day 9 - June 18 - Birding and Wildlife Watching on Teller Road

Today we head out for the first of our two big days in the Alaskan bush north of Nome. We'll be driving the unpaved Teller Road for the whole day. Great birds and wildlife may be seen anywhere along this route. We hope to encounter one or more **Muskox** families today, and there are good chances of seeing **Grizzly Bear**, **Moose**, **Caribou**, and **Red Fox**. Some exciting birds we'll be searching for are **Bluethroat**, **Rock Ptarmigan**, **Pomarine Jaeger**, **Short-eared Owl**, and **Snow Bunting**.

Lodging: Aurora Inn



## Day 10 - June 19 - Birding and Wildlife Watching on Council Road

On our last big day in Alaska, we'll be driving the famed birding route along Council Road, northeast of Nome. We'll see some beautiful scenery as we search for birds and other animals along the way. Before we leave the coast, we'll do some birding on the shores of Safety Sound. Some birds we hope to see there are **Yellow-billed Loon**, **King Eider**, **Sabine's Gull**, and **Aleutian Tern**. Further in the backcountry, we'll be on the lookout for **Arctic Warbler**, **Boreal Chickadee**, **Pine Grosbeak**, **Bohemian Waxwing**, and more. In the evening we'll make a toast to our grand adventure and review our final bird and wildlife lists.

Lodging: Aurora Inn

## Day 11 - June 20 - Fly Home

After breakfast we'll head to the airport and say our final goodbyes as we part company.



# ALASKA

## YOUR GUIDES

### DAVID JAFFE

David Jaffe has been guiding and teaching since 1991. His childhood interest in nature eventually led him to Evergreen State College, WA where he earned a B.S. in Environmental Studies and Geology. After 13 years of 'life-experience' he returned to graduate school, earning a M.S. in Applied Ecology with The Field Naturalist Program from the University of Vermont.

David has trekked through the Himalaya in Nepal, looked into the eyes of masked boobies in the Galápagos, sought nudibranchs on the Great Barrier Reef, and walked the Ghats along the Ganges River in India. He has led backcountry trips in Denali National Park, learned from students in Kentucky, and gained great insights while hitchhiking home from work in Yosemite National Park. He has experience as a naturalist in many of the lower 48 states and Baja California. David worked as a divemaster in Australia, Costa Rica, and India. He assisted with the establishment of a marine protected area off the coast of Madagascar and researched and formally studied birds in Canada and South America. His understanding, love and enthusiasm about the natural world continues to grow.



### STEVE BACKUS

Steve is an avid birder and naturalist with a background in the maritime industry hailing from North Carolina. Through his work and personal travels he has gotten to see many beautiful corners of the world and loves to share what he has experienced.

An infinitely curious person by nature, Steve is drawn to explore the life around him and the environments they occupy. Though the particulars of the individual organisms are incredibly exciting, he feels particularly drawn to the stories told of the relationships in the world around us and how those came to be. The constant flux of the natural world is of endless interest to him, and sharing the things he has learned is a great passion of his. Learning how life interacts and connects is a true passion of Steve's.

As a mariner, waterbirds are of particular interest to Steve and his time as a ship's naturalist, a captain of wildlife cruises, a point counter at migration hot-spots, and many other employments and community science efforts has deepened his appreciation of them. Though our feathered friends are Steve's primary area of expertise, he can be found peeking under logs and listening by swamps at night for the creeping and crawling life found beneath us.



# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## THE PACE AND STYLE OF OUR TOURS

The primary goal of our trips is to experience and learn about the natural world, especially the region's birds and other wildlife, and of course, to have fun! As birding is often a primary focus of our tours, and birds are active in the morning, we will sometimes have early morning outings before breakfast. That said, our style of birding may not be ideal for hard-core "listers." We prefer to spend time observing the species we encounter, and learn a bit about their natural history, rather than rushing through the field to add the maximum number of species to our bird list. We also make diversions for interesting, non-avian wildlife, plants, geological wonders, and cultural activities. The pace of most of our trips is moderate, and we encourage anyone in good health to attend and enjoy the experience. Please contact us if you need specific information on the types of physical activities on a tour and their physical requirements.

We strive to immerse participants in the local culture and to that end, wherever possible, we stay in locally owned and operated hotels that are designed and run in an environmentally sustainable way. Though some accommodations may be more basic than others, all are safe, clean and comfortable. We also utilize the services of local guides, visit local markets, and other culturally significant sites.

## TOUR DATE AND TRIP LEADER CHANGES

Leaders and schedules are determined up to a year in advance of our tours. In the event that we have a change in a tour's dates or leaders, we reserve the right to do so, and will strive to inform participants as early in the process as possible. Additional leaders may be added to tours according to the group size, and will be specified in the tour itinerary. We also reserve the right to cancel any trip for which there are insufficient reservations.

## HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE TOUR

We are opening this tour exclusively to members of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, so if you're interested, **please contact the Travel Desk at [travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org)**

Then we'll send you the link to our online registration form. You can choose to pay your deposit by credit card or check. See 'Deposit Policy' below.

## DEPOSIT POLICY

A deposit is due at the time of registration. ***A deposit is the only thing that guarantees your place on the trip.*** Registration can be made over the phone with a credit card: 503-714-3504. *Note:* there is an additional, non-refundable 3.0% fee for credit card payments.

Checks are happily accepted and should be made out to *Wild Latitudes LLC*. Include the tour name on the memo line of the check and send to:

Wild Latitudes, PO Box 25115, Portland, OR 97298.

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# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## PAYMENT POLICY

Full payment is required **90 days** prior to the tour departure date for international tours or any tour involving flights; and **30 days** prior to the tour departure date for local (i.e. in the Portland, Oregon area), van-based tours.

## CANCELLATION POLICY

In the event a participant needs to cancel a reservation for any tour, the following policies will apply:

- **90 days** or more prior to tour departure date, the deposit will be refunded, minus an administrative fee of \$100.
- **Less than 90 days but more than 60 days** prior to tour departure date, all payments refunded, minus 50% of deposit.
- **Less than 60 days** prior to tour departure date, no refunds will be given.

**We *strongly* recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself from unforeseen circumstances.**

If for any reason, Wild Latitudes cancels a tour, prior to its start, full refunds, minus the cost of any internal (i.e. in-country) airline tickets purchased, will be given to all participants. In the event the tour is cancelled while underway due to unforeseen events such as but not limited to natural disaster, military activities, social uprising, or other extremely dangerous conditions not within the control of Wild Latitudes, no refund will be issued.

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