

# MAMMALS seen in Alaska June 15 – July 4 2014

Stefan Lithner



humpback whale

Photo Stefan © Lithner

During above mentioned period I participated in an eco-trip arranged and managed by Samuel Hansson, Heliangelus Nature Tours (Heliangelus naturresor). This trip was arranged and managed as a birdwatching trip, but a number of mammals and butterflies were also observed. A report in Swedish with details about localities, sites, transportations, food and birds is available in Swedish on on <http://www.heliangelus.se/>. This compilation is focused on mammals. A few more comments are presented for species we observed. Two species observed by others than our group members are also commented since these two species are of great interest to many mammal watchers.

All participants on this trip were from Sweden; Samuel Hansson, Tranås [trip manager] (SH), Göran Andersson, Trosa (GA), Krister Aronsson, Katrineholm (KA), Stefan Johansson Karlskoga (SJ), Kristian Kjellberg Falköping (KK), Lennart Lander Vikbolandet (LL), Stefan Lithner Karlshamn (SL), Anders Nothagen, Varberg (AN), Siv Persson, Malmö (SP), Bo Settergren, Kristianstad (BS), Robert Tuveson, Vargön (RT).

On June 15 we landed in Anchorage, were picked up by a shuttle and transported to Puffin Inn. The following morning we went by air to Nome. We stayed at Aurora Inn. Here we spent three full days on well known birding sites; Council Road, Safety Lagoon, Teller Road, Kougarak Road. On June 20 we returned to Anchorage. The following morning we headed for Denali National Park by car. On route we made shorter stops at Westchester Lagoon, Byers Lake, Ottoo Lake and Stampede Road. On June 22 we spent the whole day in Denali National Park. We took a shuttle from Visitors Centre to Wonder Lake and back. On June 23 we drove via Stampede Road, Fairbanks, North Pole, Delta Junction, and along Richardson

Highway and Denali Highway up to Tangle River Inn. The morning of June 24 we spent along Denali Highway. In the afternoon we drove back to Anchorage via Paxton and Glenallen. On June 25 we took an early flight to Barrow, arrived and checked in at King Eider Inn. We spent three full days in Barrow. There were three roads easily passable by car; Cakeeater Road, Gas Well Road and road towards Point Barrow. We spent considerable time along those roads and also around Freshwater Lake. In late afternoon of June 28 we returned to Anchorage. The following morning we started our drive to Homer. We made shorter stops at Hillside Park, Beluga Point, Potter Marsh, and made a longer stop at Anchor Point. June 30 we spent at sites in the neighbourhood of Homer; Homestead Trail, Homer Spit and Anchor Point. Tuesday July 1:st we started at Homestead Trail, continued via Ninilchic and Russian River Trail and then drove on to Seward, where we stayed at Stellers B & B. Wednesday July 2 we spent all day on Kenai Fjords National Park. On July 3 we returned to Anchorage via Indian Creek and Potter Marsh. In the evening we boarded our flight back to Sweden.



American red fox

Photo © Stefan Lithner



caribou

Photo © Stefan Lithner

Taxa presented in order according to Duff/Lawson; Mammals of the World , a Checklist 2004.

arctic ground squirrel

*Spermophilus parryii*

Around Barrow specimen were seen almost daily with up to five individuals. In Denali National Park sixteen were counted 22/6.

red squirrel

*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*

This species was observed with at least seven individuals in forested areas: two in Denali National Park 22/6, two along Stampede Road 23/6, one in Hillside Park 29/6, one along Homestead Trail 1/7, one along Russian River Trail 1/7 and three around Stellers B & B Seward 2/7 and 3/7.

American beaver

*Castor canadensis*

Two in a pond near Denali Highway 23/6 and also one in Lake Paxson 24/6 (SH).

northern red-backed vole

*Clethrionomus rutilus*

Two seen on Teller Road, Nome 17/6 (SL, SP). Four were seen in Denali National Park from Visitors Centre and along road to Wonder Lake 22/6 and one was seen along Russian River Trail Kenai Peninsula 1/7.

northern bog lemming

*Synaptomys borealis*

One seen in moist habitat dominated by low dwarf birch (*Betula nana*) Denali Highway on slope near mile 13 post 24/6 (SL).

brown lemming

*Lemmus trimucronatus*

One roused, slipping into a hide on tundra habitat Barrow 27/6 (SL).

red fox

*Vulpes (vulpes) fulva*

One seen along Teller Road, Barrow 17/6 . Two seen along Kougarok Road Barrow 18/6. One seen along Safety Lagoon, Barrow 19/6 and 20/6 and two seen in Denali National Park 22/6.

American black bear

*Ursus americanus*

At mile post 145 George Parks Highway from Anchorage to Denali National Park a female with cub occurred next to the road and eventually crossed it.



brown bear

Photo © Stefan Lithner



brown beare

Photo © Stefan Lithner

brown bear

*Ursus arctos*

A mother with two cubs was discovered along Kougarok Road. Nome, and six animals including a mother with two cubs were seen along the road between Visitors Centre and Wonder Lake in Denali National Park 22/6.

polar bear

not seen by us

*Thalarctos maritimus*

When we arrived to Barrow no polar bear had been sighted for about two weeks. When the inhabitants stopped putting out whale carcasses on the ice off the coast of Point Barrow the polar bears had become scarce. Only one bear had been sighted during the last month. Nevertheless we learned from a local eco-guide that this bear visited a whale carcass put in the "Gravel Pit" on our last day in Barrow.

**Steller's sea lion**

*Eumetopias jubatus*

On our boat-trip in Kenai Fjords National Park we saw about 60 individuals 2/7.

ribbon seal

not seen by us

*Histiopoca fasciata*

This species is present off the coast of Barrow, but they do not pass the connected ice bordering the open sea. In order to see them you need a boat to get out onto open waters. During our stay in Barrow a hunter shot five seals in the morning of 26/6. Two or three of these were ribbon seals. The others were bearded seals.

largha seal

*Phoca largha*

One was seen close to the shore not far from Solomon Bridge, Nome 19/6.

harbour seal

*Phoca vitulina*

In the Pacific Ocean (south of Aleutian Range and Pibrilloff Islands) we found our first harbour seals. At Homer Spit we saw three and at Anchor Point we saw one on 30/6. In Kenai Fjords National Park we saw about 60 on 2/7.

ringed seal

*Phoca hispida*

Our first ringed seal for the trip we saw near Safety Lagoon, Nome 19/6. Along the coast of Barrow it was more common: six on 25/6, 23 on 26/6 and about 15 on 27/6

bearded seal

*Erignathus barbatus*

One younger individual was identified along the road to Barrow Point 25/6. Another seal was lying on the ice looking much too large and too pale brown to be anything else, but since it refused to show anything besides most of its body, we did not identify this individual. A local eco-guide told us that the bearded seal has just “started to come in for this season” to rest on the ice.



sea otter

Photo © Stefan Lithner



harbour seal

Photo © Stefan Lithner

sea otter

*Enhydra lutris*

Four were seen at Anchor Point and three were seen at Homer 29/6. About 300 were seen around Homer 30/6 and about 50 were seen in Kenai Fjords National Park 2/7.

American water shrew

*Sorex palustris*

One seen 1/7 at Stellers B & B Seward (SH).

tundra shrew

*Sorex tundraensis*

One evading observers feet and slipped into a hide on tundra habitat Barrow 27/6 (SL).

dusky shrew

*Sorex monticolus*

One seen at dusk along gravel road outside Stellers B & B Seward 2/7 (SL).

little brown myotis

*Myotis lucifugus*

During three nights observer searched for this species with a Pettersson 240X ultrasound bat-detector. In the early morning of 24/6 (between 01:30 and 02:00) one individual was encountered only about 200 meters from Puffin Inn, Anchorage (SL).

“Behaviour of bat much reminiscent of *Myotis mystacinus*, since it seemed to patrol. It passed over me four times with about five minutes intervals during a twenty minute-period and was heard only for a rather limited period each time”. (SL).

northern minke whale

*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

One seen for a short moment not far from Solomon Bridge, Nome 19/6 (LL)

humpback whale

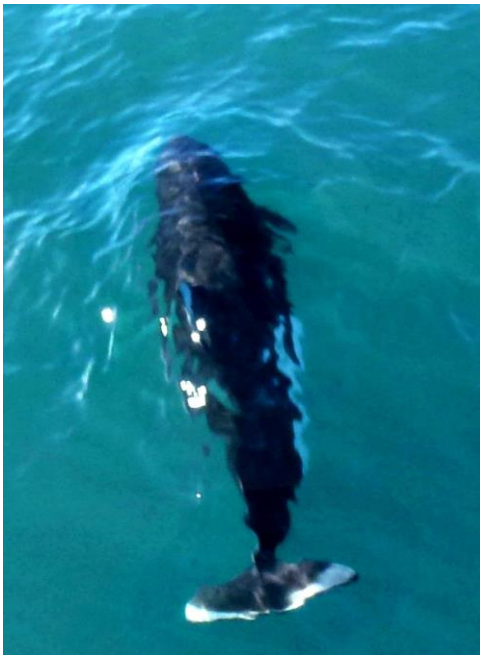
*Megaptera novaeangliae*

One seen from shore at Anchor Point, Homer 30/6 and about 20 were seen in Kenai Fjords National Park Seward 2/7. The estimation was made directly after our boat trip. Analysing photos afterwards indicates that this was probably an underestimation.

grey whale

*Eschrichtius robustus*

A group of at least three was observed from road to Barrow Point, not far from shore 26/3. Three were seen almost at the same time.



Dall's porpoise

Photo Siv Persson



Steller's sea lion

Photo © Stefan Lithner

**Dall's porpoise**

*Phocoenoides dalli*

In Kenai Fjords National Park about 15 were seen on 2/7.

killer whale

*Orcinus orca*

One was seen at Anchor point in the afternoon of 30/6.

Pacific white-sided dolphin

*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*

One was seen foraging not far from land at Anchor Point in the afternoon of 30/6.

moose (American elk)

*Alces alces*

Two were seen south of Nome 16/6. Three were seen along Kougark Road Nome 18/6. One was seen along George Parks Highway and one was seen along Stampede Road 21/6. Four were seen in Denali National 23/6. Along the road Between Fairbans and Paxson we saw six on 23/6. We saw three in Anchor Point – Homer area 30/6 and one along the road 1/7.

caribou

*Rangifer tarandus*

Scattered groups and one big herd of about 85 heads, landing at a total of about 110 heads were seen in Denali National Park on 22/6.

A few (feral or domestic) reindeer were seen around None 16 – 18/6.

**Dall's sheep**

*Ovis dalli*

In Denali National Park we saw scattered groups of 3 – 7 heads, making a total of at least 23 heads on 22/6. Also along Seward Highway we saw four on 29/6, and one along Russian River Trail, Kenai Peninsula 1/7.

**muskox**

*Ovibos moschatus*

A group of 21 heads were seen along Teller Road, None on 17/6. These animals were introduced on Seward Peninsula 1970 near None, and near Port Clearance 1981. The reintroduction project seems successful and the number of muskox is now estimated to be about 3000 heads.

humpback whale Photos © Stefan Lithner:



starting a jump



blowing



starting a dive



diving; leaving surface

**Addresses and links**

Report compiler Stefan Lithner [slit@lithner.se](mailto:slit@lithner.se)

Photos from this trip available on [http://www.pbase.com/stefan\\_lithner](http://www.pbase.com/stefan_lithner)

Heliangelus Nature Tours on <http://www.heliangelus.se/>