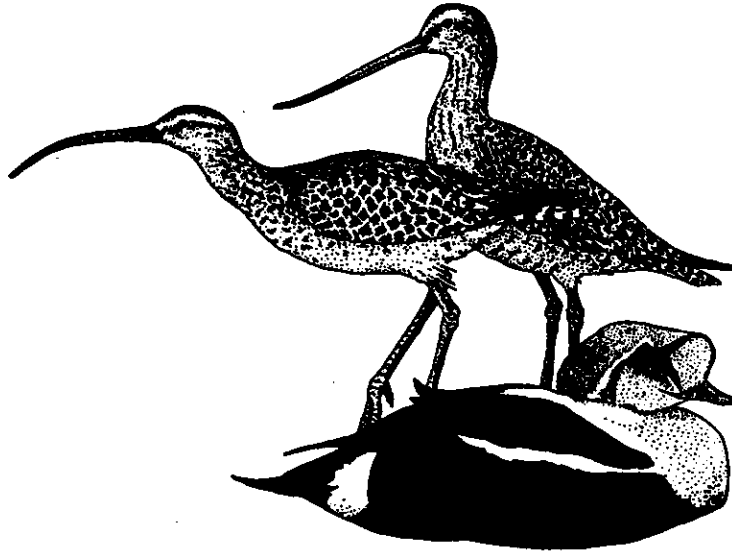


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Cinder River Marbled Godwit Trip Report
and Annotated Bird List

6 May - 10 May 1996



By
Heather Moore
Angela C. Mehall-Niswander
Corey D. Adler

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuge Complex
P.O. Box 277
King Salmon, Alaska 99613

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INTRODUCTION

During the period of 6-10 May 1996, we stayed at the Griechen cabin (labeled Camp on map) on the south shore of Cinder River Lagoon. The lagoon is encompassed by the Cinder River State Critical Habitat Area. This was the second year's attempt to capture and radio-tag marbled godwits (*Limosa fedoa beringia*) as part of a master's project initiated by Angela Mehall-Niswander of Oregon State University (Eskelin et al. 1995). Appreciation is extended to the staff of the Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuge Complex, especially Wildlife Biologist Donna Dewhurst, Airplane Pilot Bill Smoke and Refuge Manager Ronald E. Hood. Thank you also to Alec and Stella Griechen for use of their cabin.

Following is an annotated list of 51 species identified during our stay. Included under each species heading is a brief description of the status and distribution of that species, as well as the high count day and any other pertinent information that was collected. Weather was as follows:

- 6 May - Sunny, winds 10 knots NW
- 7 May - High overcast ceiling until 2pm, then sunny, winds 15 knots NW
- 8 May - Foggy, clearing by 6pm, winds light NW
- 9 May - Sunny, winds 5 knots NW
- 10 May - Sunny, winds calm.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Gavia stellata. **Red-throated loon**. Uncommon migrant. Birds were sighted on 3 days with the high count being 2 on 8 May. All birds were seen on the Bering side of Edith Spit, outside of Cinder Lagoon.

Gavia immer. **Common loon**. Recorded every day, with a high count of 3 on 6 May. All birds were observed on the south side of Edith Spit.

Phalacrocorax auritus. **Double-crested cormorant**. Three birds were observed at the mouth of Cinder Lagoon on 7 May, and 1 was observed flying across the mudflats late at night on 9 May.

Cygnus columbianus. **Tundra swan**. Heard across Cinder Lagoon on 9 May, but not visible.

Chen canagica. **Emperor goose**. Abundant migrant in this area. Due to bright sunlight, observers were unable to count all the birds they could see. Peak estimates were around 15,000 on 6 May, with a noticeable decline by the end of our stay. Most birds were observed on mudflats between Back Bay and the mouth of Mud River.

Branta bernicula. **Brant**. Two birds were observed on the mudflats near Dry Valley on 9 May.

Anas crecca (carolinensis). **American green-winged teal**. One pair was observed on the south side of Edith Spit on 7 May.

Anas platyrhynchos. **Mallard**. Two drakes were observed on 7 May feeding near the freshwater ponds.

Anas acuta. **Northern pintail**. Common migrant and possible breeder. Birds were observed on 3 days with a high count of 12 on 7 May. Most birds were observed in tidal pools at low tide in the southwest corner of Cinder Lagoon.

- Aythya marila*. **Greater scaup**. Sixty birds were observed in a raft on 6 May in the southwest corner of Cinder Lagoon. The bird went unrecorded for the remainder of our stay.
- Somateria mollissima*. **Common eider**. Recorded daily at the mouth of Cinder Lagoon, and on the Bering side of Edith Spit. High count was 100 on 6 May. Both sexes were observed, and all birds were in full breeding plumage.
- Somateria spectabilis*. **King eider**. Recorded daily at the mouth of Cinder Lagoon, and on the Bering side of Edith Spit. High count was 80 on 7 May. Both sexes were observed, and all birds were in full breeding plumage.
- Polysticta stelleri*. **Steller's eider**. Recorded on 6, 7, and 8 May at the mouth of Cinder Lagoon and on the Bering side of Edith Spit. High count was 30 on 7 May. Both sexes were observed, and all birds were in full breeding plumage.
- Histrionicus histrionicus*. **Harlequin duck**. Birds were observed on 7, 8 and 9 May in mixed flocks of scoters. High count was 24 on 9 May.
- Clangula hymemalis*. **Oldsquaw**. One bird was observed in a flock of black scoters on 9 May, on the Bering side of Edith Spit.
- Melanitta nigra*. **Black scoter**. Recorded daily in Cinder Lagoon and on the Bering side of Edith Spit. High count was 425 on 7 May.
- Melanitta fusca*. **White-winged scoter**. Recorded on 6, 7 and 9 May in mixed flocks of black scoters. High count was 50 on 6 May.
- Melanitta perspicillata*. **Surf scoter**. Recorded on 7, 8 and 9 May, with a high count of 4 on 8 May. All birds were observed in a mixed flock of black scoters.
- Bucephala clangula*. **Common goldeneye**. Observed on 7 and 9 May, with a high count of 4 on 7 May.
- Mergus merganser*. **Common merganser**. Recorded on 6 and 7 May, with a high count of 50 on 7 May.
- Mergus serrator*. **Red-breasted merganser**. Recorded daily on the Bering side of Edith Spit and in Cinder Lagoon. A high count of 91 was observed on 9 May.
- Haliaeetus leucocephalus*. **Bald eagle**. Recorded daily in all areas of Cinder Lagoon. A high daily count of 12 was observed on 6 May.
- Asio flammeus*. **Short-eared owl**. One bird was observed hunting on the grass near Hangar Creek, late at night on 8 May.
- Grus canadensis*. **Sandhill crane**. Birds were heard on the south side of Cinder Lagoon on 8 and 9 May. Because birds were not seen, accurate counts could not be obtained.
- Pluvialis squatarola*. **Black-bellied plover**. Two were recorded each on 6 and 7 May. Most birds were flying near camp.
- Pluvialis dominica*. **Lesser golden-plover**. A flock of 35 was recorded flying along the beach past camp on both 6 and 7 May.

- Charadrius semipalmatus*. **Semipalmated plover**. One bird was observed on the beach near camp on 6 May.
- Tringa melanoleuca*. **Greater yellowlegs**. Ten birds were observed on 6 May near Hangar Creek.
- Limnosa lapponica*. **Bar-tailed godwit**. Only identified on 9 May, when 6 were observed feeding in a mixed flock of marbled godwits on the mudflats of Cinder Lagoon. Birds appeared to be paired up and males displayed aggressive behavior towards each other.
- Limnosa fedoa beringiae*. **Marbled godwit**. Observed daily in large feeding flocks on all areas of Cinder Lagoon. Most birds were observed on tidal flats near Hanger Creek. At low tide birds were too spread out and distant to count, but estimates were around 200.
- Actitis macularia*. **Spotted sandpiper**. One bird was observed calling on the tidal flats of Cinder Lagoon, late at night on 8 May.
- Arenaria interpres*. **Ruddy turnstone**. Twenty were observed feeding near camp on 9 May. Also, 2 were observed in a flock of black turnstones on 8 May.
- Arenaria melanocephala*. **Black turnstone**. Observed daily feeding along the shoreline of Cinder Lagoon, often with a flock of rock sandpipers. High count was 28 on 7 May.
- Calidris alba*. **Sanderling**. Ten birds in breeding plumage were observed running in the surf on the Bering side of Edith Spit on 8 May.
- Calidris mauri*. **Western sandpiper**. Eleven birds were observed feeding along the tidal flats of Cinder Lagoon, near Hanger creek on 7 May.
- Calidris minutilla*. **Least sandpiper**. One bird was recorded with the 11 western sandpipers (above) on 7 May.
- Calidris alpina*. **Dunlin**. Six were observed feeding with rock sandpipers along the Cinder Lagoon shoreline on 7 May.
- Calidris ptilocnemis*. **Rock sandpiper**. Observed daily in large flocks, flying and feeding along the entire Cinder Lagoon shoreline. High daily count was 510 on 7 May. One bird was observed exhibiting distraction displays on 8 May.
- Limnocyptes griseus*. **Short-billed dowitcher**. Five birds were recorded on 6 May on tidal flats near camp.
- Stercorarius parasiticus*. **Parasitic jaeger**. Observed daily flying over Edith Spit or the mudflats of Cinder Lagoon, with a high count of 2 on 7 May.
- Stercorarius longicaudus*. **Long-tailed jaeger**. One bird was observed on 6 May flying northeast on Edith Spit.
- Larus philadelphia*. **Bonaparte's gull**. One adult was seen near the mouth of Cinder Lagoon on 7 May.
- Larus canus*. **Mew gull**. Recorded daily in all tidal habitats. A high count of 73 were observed on 9 May.

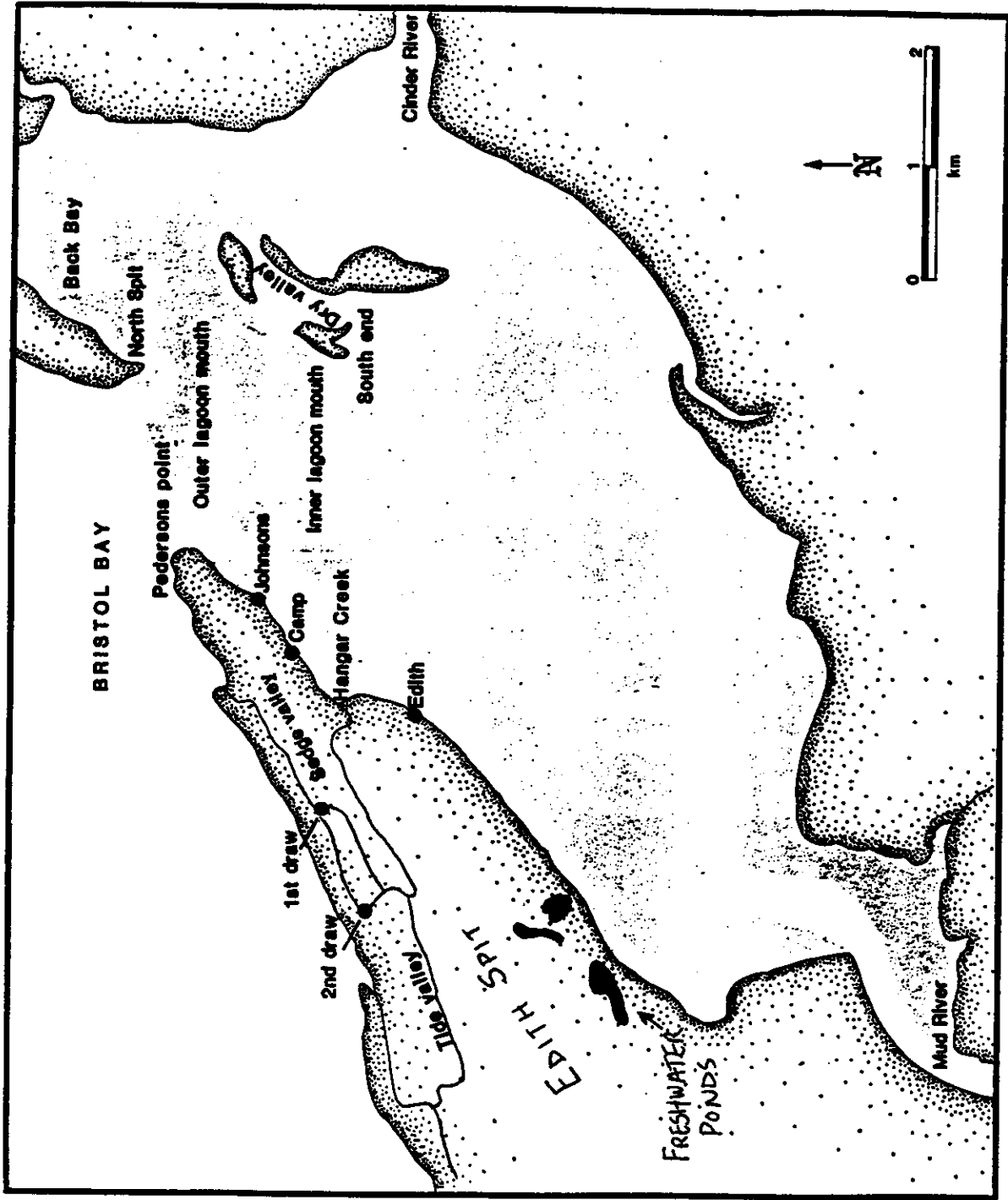
- Larus argentatus*. Herring gull. A single adult was observed on the Cinder Lagoon tidal flats on 8 May.
- Larus glaucescens*. Glaucous-winged gull. Recorded daily in all habitats with a high count of 700 on 7 May.
- Larus hyperboreus*. Glaucous gull. Single adults were recorded on 7 and 9 May at the mouth of Cinder Lagoon. Both birds were in 1st winter plumage.
- Rissa tridactyla*. Black-legged kittiwake. A small number of birds were heard but not seen on 6 May, off shore near the mouth of Cinder Lagoon.
- Sterna paradisaea*. Arctic tern. Recorded daily near the mouth of Cinder Lagoon and on the Bering side of Edith Spit. A high daily count of 97 was recorded on 8 May.
- Corvus corax*. Common raven. Recorded daily flying near Edith Spit. A high count of 4 was recorded on 6 May.
- Calcarius lapponicus*. Lapland longspur. Recorded daily on all dry portions of Edith Spit. A high count of 20 was recorded on 6 May.
- Carduelis flammea*. Common redpoll. Three birds were observed flying over camp on 9 May.

SUMMARY OF GODWIT BANDING PROJECT

No marbled godwits were captured at Cinder Lagoon during 6-10 May 1996. Mist nets were the only method attempted, but due to the expanse of tidal flats a 3-person crew was unable to funnel them adequately. The godwits were easily approached and a rocket net may have been feasible. The godwits were observed feeding along tidal streams, but the speed of the changing tideline provided only a limited time to work. On one occasion 17 godwits were successfully herded from a half kilometer to <10 m from the mist nets. It was clear that the birds saw our nets, as they flew right around them.

LITERATURE CITED

- Eskelin, T.D., D.A. Dewhurst and A.C. Mehall-Niswander. 1995. Cinder River Marbled godwit trip report and annotated bird list, 4-8 May 1995. U.S. Fish and Wild. Serv., King Salmon, Alas., (Unpubl). 6pp.



Cinder River lagoon study area