

The Jim-Swan area includes wetland, forest and shrub lowland habitat and surrounding wooded uplands and cliffs. This diversity of habitat supports a rich diversity of birds. Family groups and species are listed in American Ornithological Union order and are classed as either "Regularly" or "Rarely" observed based on historical observations and expected seasonal abundance. Most species listed are migratory and leave the area in the fall and return in April, May and early June. Generally, the best birding is in spring and early summer when birds vocalize often to establish territories, and sport their most striking plumage. Birds are generally more secretive as they progress to nesting and rearing young. Whatever the season, birds are engaged in life-sustaining activity; be careful not to disrupt their activity. Take binoculars and your choice of field guide and enjoy the birds of Jim-Swan, a designated Important Bird Area. Report your sightings to Mat-Su Birders, a wild bird club, at [msbirder@mtaonline.net](mailto:msbirder@mtaonline.net), to help increase our knowledge of species occurrence. Your contributions will lead to more comprehensive future editions of this checklist! Jim-Swan is part of the Knik River Public Use Area, and is managed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

## The Checklist By Family Group

**Waterfowl (*Anatidae*)** Ducks, swans and geese are migratory birds and are very commonly observed in the Jim-Swan wetlands. While many nest here, others only rest and feed before continuing their migration. Waterfowl can be observed near shore if not disturbed; a spotting scope and/or canoe will make viewing these beautiful birds even better.

### Regularly Observed:

- Common Loon
- Pacific Loon
- Horned Grebe
- Red-necked Grebe
- Tundra Swan
- Trumpeter Swan
- Canada Goose
- Northern Pintail
- Mallard
- American Wigeon
- Northern Shoveler
- Green-winged Teal
- Canvasback
- Ring-necked Duck
- Greater Scaup
- Lesser Scaup
- Bufflehead
- Common Goldeneye
- Barrow's Goldeneye
- Common Merganser

### Rarely Observed:

- Greater White-fronted Goose
- Snow Goose
- Gadwall
- Blue-winged Teal
- Redhead
- Long-tailed Duck
- Surf Scoter
- White-winged Scoter
- Red-breasted Merganser



**Upland Game Birds (*Phasianidae*)** Birds in this family are nonmigratory and generally occupy woodlands & brush (grouse) or alpine/subalpine habitat (ptarmigan).

### Regularly Observed:

- Ruffed Grouse
- Spruce Grouse
- Willow Ptarmigan

**Diurnal Raptors (*Accipitridae and Falconidae*)** These birds of prey are active during the day. Most are migratory; some Bald Eagles and Northern Goshawks stay all year. Raptors have a wide variety of habitat preferences; Golden Eagles prefer the cliffs and alpine habitat above the wetlands while harriers prefer open marsh.

### Regularly Observed:

- Osprey
- Bald Eagle
- Northern Harrier
- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Northern Goshawk
- Red-tailed Hawk (Harlan's subspecies)
- Golden Eagle
- American Kestrel
- Merlin

### Rarely Observed:

- Rough-legged Hawk
- Peregrine Falcon
- Gyrfalcon



**Rails and Cranes (*Gruiformes*)** Sandhills Cranes are observed regularly in Jim-Swan; sometimes seen in large flocks during migration.

- Sandhill Crane

**Shorebirds (*Charadriidae, Scolopacidae*)** These small to medium sized wading birds occur in small numbers relative to more coastal areas. They are most easily observed during migration when feeding near shorelines, mudflats and wetlands. A few species such as yellowlegs and Wilson's snipe nest here and are often heard more than seen.

### Regularly Observed:

- Greater Yellowlegs
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Spotted Sandpiper
- Wilson's Snipe
- Red-necked Phalarope

### Rarely Observed:

- American Golden-Plover
- Semipalmated Plover
- Whimbrel
- Hudsonian Godwit
- Semipalmated Sandpiper
- Pectoral Sandpiper
- Long-billed Dowitcher
- Short-billed Dowitcher

**Gulls & Terns (*Laridae*)** These are medium to large, migratory sea birds with long wings and overall white to gray body color. The Arctic Tern flies to Antarctica each year - an approximate round trip flight of 25,000 miles makes this the world's greatest migrant!

### Regularly Observed:

- Bonaparte's Gull
- Mew Gull
- Herring Gull
- Arctic Tern

### Rarely Observed:

- Glaucous-winged Gull



**Owls (*Strigidae*)** Nocturnal raptors (owls) are primarily active at night. Although most are fairly common they are rarely observed. The Short-eared Owl is the only true migrant. Other species may undergo short seasonal movements depending on food availability. Listen for owls from February to April when they are announcing nesting territories.

### Regularly Observed:

- Great Horned Owl

### Rarely Observed:

- Northern Hawk Owl
- Great Gray Owl
- Short-eared Owl
- Boreal Owl
- Northern Saw-whet Owl

**Kingfishers (*Alcedinidae*)** The handsome Belted Kingfisher is regularly observed, often perched near water or diving for small fish. They occasionally winter here if they have access to open water and food.

- Belted Kingfisher

**Woodpeckers (*Picidae*)** These small to medium sized birds occupy wooded areas throughout Jim-Swan year-round except for the migratory Northern Flicker.

### Regularly Observed:

- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker

### Rarely Observed:

- Three-toed Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker

**Flycatchers (*Tyrannidae*)** Flycatchers are very small migratory birds generally dull in color and often most easily identified by their call.

### Regularly Observed:

- Alder Flycatcher
- Olive-sided Flycatcher\*

### Rarely Observed:

- Western Wood-Pewee
- Hammond's Flycatcher

**Shrikes (*Laniidae*)** The Northern Shrike is a medium-sized predatory bird that is rarely observed in Jim-Swan. Migratory but some individuals spend the winter in this general region. Occupies diverse habitat.

- Northern Shrike

**Jays & Ravens (*Corvidae*)** Members of this family are perhaps our most noticeable birds of all - smart, gregarious and comfortable in just about any habitat. All three species are regularly observed year-round.

- Gray Jay
- Black-billed Magpie
- Common Raven



**Swallows (*Hirundinidae*)** Graceful and swift, swallows are migratory birds that spend their summers raising families on Alaska's abundant insects!

Regularly Observed:

- Tree Swallow
- Violet-green Swallow

Rarely Observed:

- Bank Swallow
- Cliff Swallow

**Chickadees (*Paridae*)** Chickadees are regularly observed, very small, year-round residents in any wooded area. They keep us company even on the coldest winter days!

- Black-capped Chickadee
- Boreal Chickadee



**Nuthatches (*Sittidae*)** The Red-breasted Nuthatch is heard more than seen and is regularly observed all year in wooded areas.

- Red-breasted Nuthatch

**Creepers (*Certhiidae*)** The small Brown Creeper perfectly blends with the tree trunks where it feeds and nests. Heard more than seen, it is regularly observed all year.

- Brown Creeper

**Dipper (*Cinclididae*)** The American Dipper is an amazing bird that swims under swift water foraging for aquatic insects. A year-round resident, the dipper is rarely observed. Sings a beautiful warbling song.

- American Dipper

**Kinglets (*Regulidae*)** These tiny active birds occupy wooded areas. The ruby-crowned's song is unusually lively and loud for one so small, and is frequently heard. The ruby-crowned is migratory; the golden-crowned is generally a year-round resident.

Regularly Observed:

- Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Rarely Observed:

- Golden-crowned Kinglet

**Thrushes (*Turdidae*)** Migratory birds of wooded areas, thrushes are the favorites of many birders in Jim-Swan for their extraordinarily lovely songs.

Regularly Observed:

- Swainson's Thrush
- Hermit Thrush
- American Robin
- Varied Thrush

Rarely Observed:

- Townsend's Solitaire



**Pipits (*Motacillidae*)** Rarely observed in Jim-Swan, the American Pipit is a small migratory bird that generally occurs in open grasslands and tundra.

- American Pipit.

**Waxwings (*Bombycillidae*)** This beautiful year-round resident is regularly observed. Usually seen in flocks during winter - sometimes very large flocks.

- Bohemian Waxwing

**Wood Warblers (*Parulidae*)** These birds are small, active migratory songbirds. Many are unusually colorful. Their preferred habitat of thick foliage means they are heard far more than seen - frustrating for even patient birders!

Regularly Observed:

- Orange-crowned Warbler
- Yellow Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Townsend's Warbler\*
- Northern Waterthrush
- Wilson's Warbler

Rarely Observed:

- Blackpoll Warbler\*



**Sparrows (*Emberizidae*)** Beautiful varied songs make up for unremarkable plumage. Most are migratory; some White-Crowned sparrows and Dark-eyed juncos winter. Habitat preferences vary.

Regularly Observed:

- Savannah Sparrow
- Fox Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- White-crowned Sparrow
- Golden-crowned Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco

Rarely Observed:

- Lapland Longspur
- Snow Bunting

**Blackbirds (*Icteridae*)** Blackbirds are migratory songbirds. They generally prefer open shrubby areas, wetlands and forest edges.

Regularly Observed

- Rusty Blackbird\*

Rarely Observed

- Red-winged Blackbird

**Finches (*Fringillidae*)** Most finches are fairly common but nomadic and irruptive; some years seen in large numbers seasonally, other years seen rarely. Generally heard calling while in flight, usually in flocks.

Regularly Observed:

- Pine Grosbeak
- Common Redpoll
- Pine Siskin

Rarely Observed:

- White-winged Crossbill

\* Species' conservation status is of concern.

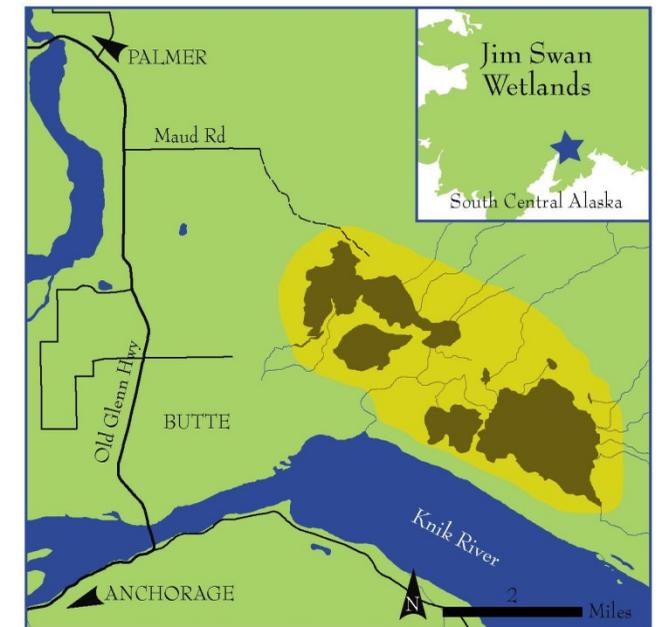
Reference Sources: Historical and current field reports; *Birds of South/Central Matanuska-Susitna Borough (A Checklist)* by Mat-Su Birders; *Field Guide to Birding in Anchorage* by R.L. Scher; *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior*, and, *The Sibley Guide to Birds* by David Allen Sibley; *A Birders Guide to Alaska* by George C. West; *Bird Biology Seminar* by the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University

Web Resources: [groups.yahoo.com/group/akbirding/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/akbirding/); [www.audubon.org/bird/iba](http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba)  
The Code of Birding Ethics: [www.americanbirding.org](http://www.americanbirding.org)

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## The Birds of JIM-SWAN A Checklist



~ Always respect wildlife, its environment and the rights of others.  
~ When birding, the welfare of the birds comes first.

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