



11



04

20250510 Fish Creek

Cathy & Koren helped find my rain-gear, left behind on our recent excursion to Outer Point beaver pond. Highlight of that walk (aside from finding coat&pants) was a pair of anxiously calling **merlin**, perturbed maybe by our proximity to a nest tree?

Coming home, we stopped at Fish Creek delta for a delightful peak-migration check-in, looping

counter-clockwise around Entrance Island.

04 Northbounders Clockwise: **snow geese**, juvenile **harrier**, **white-winged** & a few **surf scoters**.

11 Godwits spp Marsha Squires, who passed us on the LIA storm berm going out, reported **snow geese**, **harrier**, & **hudsonian godwit**. So as tide fell we scanned flocks of **dowitchers** for larger, leggier friends. This screengrab from video has both **hudsonians** and **marbleds**.

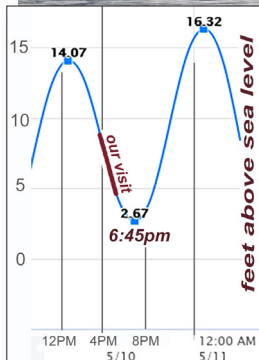
Got to north tip of Entrance Island around 4pm,

Each block has 50 counted birds. Even from 600 yards out they show clearly on the zoomed-in pano and can usually (males at least) be pegged to WW or SU. Should've taken more context photos, at beginning & end of our birding from point-3, following map. In a slideshow that'd give a fetching long-dissolve, of tide going out.

$10 \times 50 = 500 + 30 = 530$ mostly white-wings; <10% surfs

02

+ 30 more



tide falling toward 2.7-ft low at 6:45. Rapid drop from 8 to 4 feet was spectacular. First, tufts of rockweed, then whole mudflats & sandbars appeared, beckoning shorebirds in close enough to film with Nikon P1000. North Entrance Island (pt-3, following map) provides the most comprehensive scoping station anywhere on Fish Creek delta, looking west to Scoter Bay, north to the channel bars, and southeast to the inner delta.¹

02 White-wings Huge numbers of surf scoters

with very few whitewings have been building off our city

waterfront, but scoter counts have been disappointing lately out here at the other end of the Refuge. Only back home, scrutinizing this midzoom pano, did I realize these

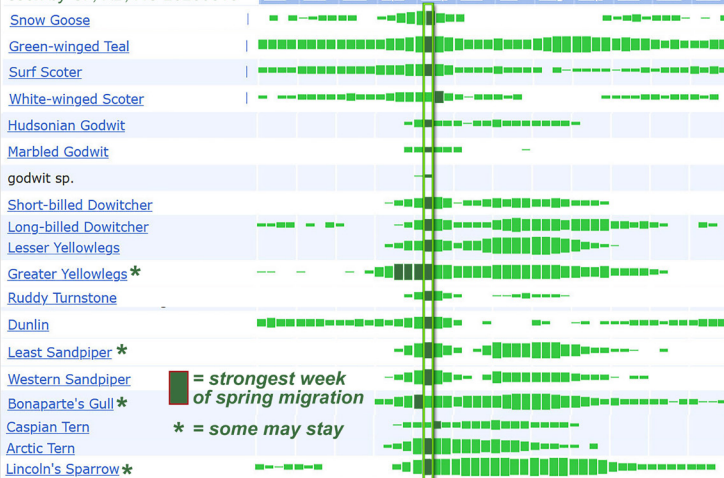
¹ In 2023, our SEALT survey team named this Scoter Bay, for want of an 'official' or Lingít name, commemorating thousands of premigratory SUSC&WWSC assembled off the peninsula during *Hotspots*, 2002-03. Marsha agreed those early-millennium rafts were larger than anything since. So it was reassuring, today, to find a respectable assemblage. Albeit, not a thousand, but more than halfway there including smaller scattered flocks.

Below is relative abundance from ebird for species seen today, not including common residents whose numbers change less dramatically. Darker green tone indicates numbers **peak this week**. All but >yellowlegs, least sandpiper, bonies, & lincoln's sparrow—who stay to nest—are strictly passers-through.¹

¹ Added LISP just because it was FOY (first of year) for us. Ken Kaufmann's recent book *The birds that Audubon missed* begins with a story about naming Lincoln's sparrow (long before Abraham)—yet another reason we should be retiring frivolous and often offensive commemorative names.

Birds by week, Taashuyee-Chookan'aani

seen by CP, KB, RC 20250510



were more than 90% whitewings.

What makes our rivermouth habitat better than 'cruiseship alley' for white-wings? In last year's scoter synopsis from *Birds of the World*,² WWs may spend more time jabbing bills into mud, seeking prey tactilely, while SUs are more visual feeders. Even surface musselbeds on this muddy delta would be messier foraging than clear waters south of J-town where river silt is less of an issue.

Maps and rationale for my proposed Birding Hotspot #2 on the spit are in the [0421 journal](#). My

2 Taash-journal-2024, p 80. Another tidbit I'd forgotten from that page-long BoW paraphrasing: "prey capture underwater has not been described" Sounds like a job for Bob Armstrong.



Yellow circles are concentrations, but every surface had scattered waterbirds, whether covered or exposed. Proposed crossing is

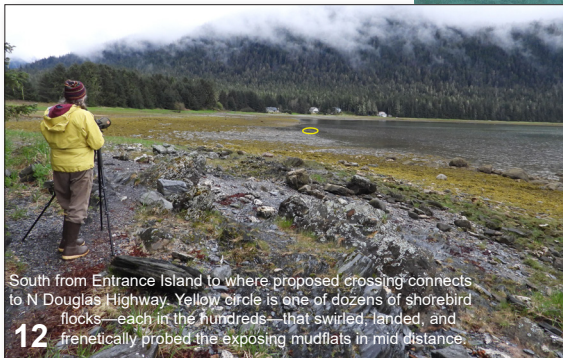
finest, most unique bird, fish & invert habitat on Taashuyee-Chookan.aani.

nominated hotspot at Shgóonaa Héenak'u was accepted in a few days, but this one still only shows as a personal location (smaller icon).

Ebird's an amazing program but any public recording process must deal with spatial

compromises and limitations. One challenge is the difference between observer position and the bird itself. No big deal for a warbler 20 feet away, but problematic when counting waterbirds up to a mile away through high-powered optics. For analysis,

richard.carstensen@gmail.com



South from Entrance Island to where proposed crossing connects to N Douglas Highway. Yellow circle is one of dozens of shorebird flocks—that swirled, landed, and frenetically probed the exposing mudflats in mid distance.

many 'hotspots' are [better treated as polygons than points](#). On my wetland-birds-conservation slideshow, drag slider to 3:20, for bird density displayed in color-gradients.

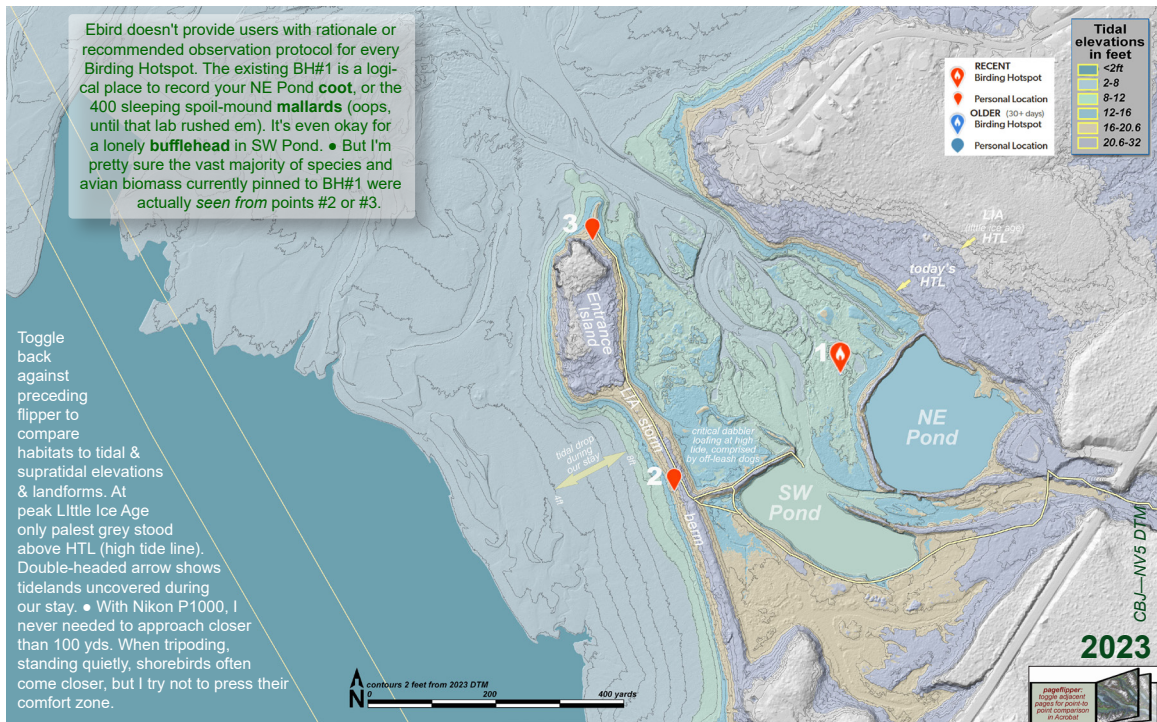
I'm new to ebird, & can only guess at administrators' constraints. *Birding Hotspots* are mapped as larger dots with flame icon. ³ Ebird's guidance:

*"A **birding hotspot** is a designated location frequently visited by other birders, while a **personal location** is one you create yourself. Use a hotspot if your entire checklist occurred within its area. Create a personal location if no existing hotspot represents your location."*

Birding Hotspots (BH) are cool; clicking em shows friends' & strangers' records going back years. They get more clicks than smaller personal location markers, and can direct birders to areas of conservation interest. *Accurate BH positioning is important.*

BH#1 at Fish Creek is in my opinion unfortunately positioned. Granted, inertia makes it difficult (impossible?) to move. We can't very well call up all the folks who've ebirded here and ask which of their birds were inside or

³ I've referred to these as "community hotspots" emphasizing the value of pooling data.



outside the Little Ice Age storm berm.

But that's a critical difference. In [Hotspots 2002-03](#) we segregated observations on the inner delta from those outside. For birds, these habitats are apples and oranges. Henceforth BH#1 should be reserved for inner-delta notes, and BH#2 (if accepted)

for notes outside. These are closer together than ebird typically spaces hotspots. But even without written guidance, Fish Creek birders would 'get it' that their Scoter Bay **horned grebe** is a better fit for point #2, and channel-marker **scaup** for pt #3.