

**BIRDMAN**

**North to Alaska**

BY TED GLOVER

We took a cruise to Alaska in mid-September, the last one of the season. As we left our home in Williams, we drove north toward Seattle, stopping by the Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge just south of Salem. This area of the Willamette Valley is a favorite stop and produced a great variety of birds including great blue heron, tree and barn swallows, spotted towhee, bush tits and even a Bewick's wren. In and near the lake we spotted green-winged teal, cinnamon teal, northern pintail, pied-bill grebe and lesser yellowlegs. Also violet-green and cliff swallows darted over the water.

Our cruise left from Seattle and headed north to stop first in Juneau, the state capital of Alaska. As we sailed into this beautiful harbor, we were greeted by the sight of thousands of gulls and hundreds of bald eagles.

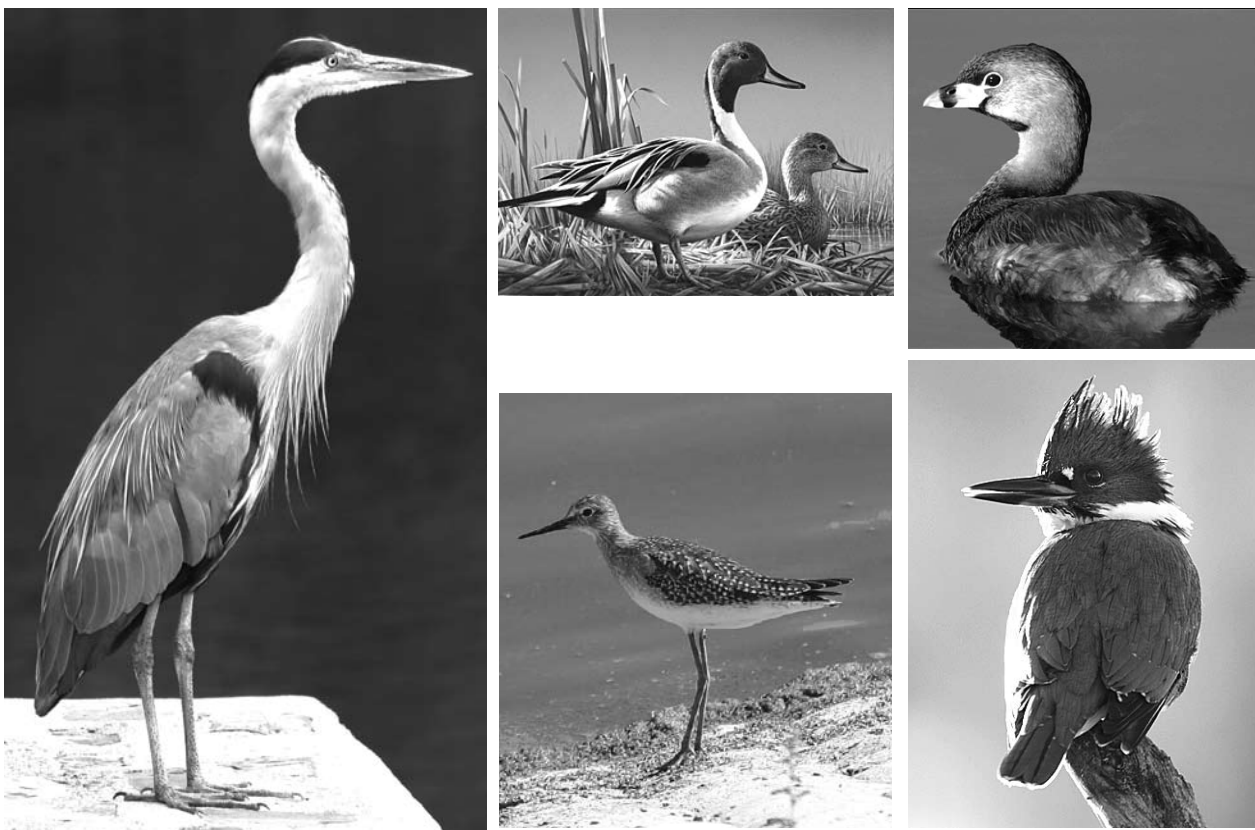
The cruise continued north to Glacier Bay National Park where we were treated to spectacular

scenery, several glaciers and a rare look at Mt. Fairweather at 15,300 feet. Numerous whales were seen including orca, humpback and minke. The bay was teeming with glaucous-winged gulls, black-legged kittiwake, pigeon guillemot and a few more bald eagles.

In Sitka, the major city on Baranof Island, we had a chance to do some hiking in the woods and around a marsh area. Bird life was abundant here including American wigeon and belted kingfisher. We also spotted chestnut-backed chickadee, winter wren, golden-crowned kinglet, white-winged crossbill, Townsend's warbler and hermit thrush.

Cruising the inside passage is a wonderful trip and the scenery spectacular. It's a great place to see birds, too! Total species count: 61.

Ted A. Glover  
541-846-0681



Above photos, clockwise from left: Blue heron-www.dpughphoto.com; Northern pintail-Joe Hautman; Pied-billed grebe-www.animal.discovery.com; Belted kingfisher-www.animal.discovery.com; Lesser yellowlegs-stanislaus birds.org.

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**Sheep in general—mini's in particular**

BY A. M. BANTULA-HARKEY

The Egyptians portrayed sheep in their sculptures way back in 4000 BC. One showed they used them to tread their grain by driving them across freshly-sown fields in the Nile valley.

There are over 200 different breeds of sheep throughout the world. They are the most defenseless of all the four-footed domesticated animals and are completely dependent on man. Sheep are unable to return to a wild existence, as can a dog, cat or horse. Sheep are used mainly for their meat and wool. Horned breeds, like the Jacob (which usually have four horns - both the males and females), are used to make exquisite buttons and dagger handles from their horns. The wool is made into clothing, rugs and fine shawls, like the one that was passed through the eye of a needle in *Lord of the Rings*.

Wool comes in fine to coarse grades, depending on the breed of sheep, and in many colors from deep coal-black to pristine white and is dyed to give even more color choices.

Then there's my mini's, created over many years of selective breeding using Shetland Sheep as my basis. They are a small breed compared to the much larger commercial breeds, and are what is

referred to as broadtails, flattails or shorttails, because they are born with a short flat tail. The mini's are friendly, even the males with their beautifully curved horns. Their meat is lean and their wool is very usable for spinning, weaving and crafts.

In the last three years I have introduced Gotland traits into my flock for the betterment of the wool quality, which gives the fleece a beautiful and lustrous look and feel. The Gotland sheep are known for their friendly disposition.

Mini's look nice out there on our lawn, mowing and fertilizing the yard. They need to be shorn at least once a year, or you can let them rue, which means they will lose their wool on their own, but it will not be a very pleasant sight. If you've ever seen what a bison looks like out on the plains, or even a picture of one, you'll know what I mean, big patches of wool missing here and there. These mini's are hardy and adaptable, full grown they can stand at the shoulders about 12 to 18 inches tall. They have a wonderful personality and are just a fun and entertaining animal to own.

A. M. Bantula-Harkey  
541-955-4793



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