

Upper Tanana Valley hit with Sparrows EVERYWHERE

“There’s constant movement on the ground and the singing is insane. I have never seen anything like this EVER.” says retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist Bud Johnson of Tok, Alaska.

“There are probably hundreds of thousands of sparrows just in Tok”.

With the late spring, a good portion of the Upper Tanana Valley is still covered in snow and migration has been delayed. Warming temperatures near the end of last week brought some melting and a big influx of birds Thursday night, May 9th. On Sunday, May 12th, a low pressure system moved in with rain and snow that continued through Monday and has essentially grounded the birds.

“We are being invaded . . . they are everywhere” posts high schooler Hattan Mollnow on Facebook. There are large concentrations of white-crowned sparrows and Lapland longspurs, but also Slate-colored juncos, Golden-crowned sparrows, Fox sparrows, American tree sparrows, Lincoln Sparrows, Savannah sparrows and Gray-crowned Rosy Finches. Thousands of birds are being drawn to the open grassy margins along the roads and to people’s feeders.

The “invasion” has grabbed people’s attention and they are doing what they can to help. Those who casually watch birds are curious about the different species they are seeing. Within one day the local grocery store sold out of bird seed. Tok resident Sally Young said she went through 20 lbs. of seed in one day. On May 15 the weather cleared. Despite being totally fascinated by their presence, we hope our feathered friends will soon be able to continue their journey to breeding grounds throughout Alaska.