

A Natural History of Arctic Alaska with Brian Barnes

ITINERARY - June 19-26, 2026

Our daily activities will depend on weather and road conditions. While a sample itinerary is included below, please note that it may shift as conditions change.

Friday, June 19 - Drive from Fairbanks to Toolik, 9-10 hours. Bring your own lunch, drinks, and snacks; all future (delicious) meals are provided at the Station. Pass by the legacies of prior wildland fires, stop at the Yukon River, Arctic Circle, Finger Mt., and the Coldfoot Arctic Interagency Visitor Ctr., through the passage over the continental divide in the Brooks Range into Alaska's North Slope.

Saturday, June 20 - Morning overview of the history and current research and education activities at TFS with a tour of the facilities. Afternoon hike with an introduction to local arctic vegetation and visits to long-term ecological research (LTER) on the local impacts of climate change, including those that will affect feedback to the Earth's climate.

Sunday, June 21 - Visit the NEON Arctic Site, learn about their abiotic and biotic measurements that contribute to the continental-scale network tracking environmental change. See their tower, plant phenology transects, and beetle plots. Drive further north to see the Arctic plain, where we will try to spot muskox and see patterned ground—all day.

Monday, June 22 - Led by graduate students, learn about their current research on ecological connections in local arctic environs of streams, lakes, terrestrial connectivity, and ecological consequences. Evening community-wide talk: "The annual cycle of the arctic ground squirrel": Toolik talking shop with Brian Barnes.

Tuesday, June 23 - Morning birding (bluethroats, yellow-billed loons!) and archaeological sites tours led by TFS naturalists. Afternoon free time for local hikes, canoeing on the lake, and/or naps.

Wednesday, June 24 - All-day visit to the Atigun River and Galbraith Lake environs. We will duck under the pipeline and hike into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with a picnic lunch; observe and catch-and-release resident Arctic ground squirrels; and visit the Galbraith Aufeis and permafrost-thaw sites. Breeding golden eagles and peregrine falcons are nearby.

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Thursday, June 25 - Additional research tours illustrated by TFS students and principal investigators. Course wrap-up, sharing stories.

Friday, June 26 - Up early with packed lunches for the 9-hour drive from TFS to Fairbanks with southbound stops, arrive approximately 7 p.m.