

Iceland: Birding & Nature Species List | June 8 – 17, 2024 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guide Kent Skaggs with local guide Daniel Bergmann. Our clients included Diane & Chip, Donna & Don, Kaye & Carol, Lee Ann, Jean & Gary, Kathy and Janet & David.

Bird and nature enthusiasts from Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Virginia and Washington traveled to the island country of Iceland to see an array of breeding bird species and to experience its stunning landscape. Starting in the southwest part of the country, we traveled clockwise on the famous and very scenic 'Ring Road', occasionally taking a detour to areas of interest. In terms of birds, we were able to see most of the species one would expect to find in Iceland at this time of year and then some. For a list of what was seen and where, please keep reading.

BIRDS - 87 species were recorded, all of which were seen. Details are included below.

The eBird link below details the 87 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Iceland: Birding and Nature | June 8-17, 2024 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the birds and mammals we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

Family or Species Common Name: Scientific Name

DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* – Annual, but rare visitor from North America. A single adult white morph bird was reported with some Graylag Geese near Hotel Rauðaskriða on June 12 and we were able to relocate the bird the following morning.

Graylag Goose *Anser anser* – Common and widespread. Seen each day at multiple locations.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* – Scattered small groups were seen on four consecutive days while we were in the northeast part of the country.

Brant *Branta bernicla* – A group of six were seen on the first day of the tour off the coast at Sandgerði.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* – Encountered only along the coast in the southeast part of the country (near the Hali Country Hotel) where they seemed to be fairly common.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* – Common and widespread. Seen each day at multiple locations.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* – Single birds were seen at two different locations in the southwest part of the country and nine were seen in the same area near Djúpvogur.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula* – Rare vagrant from Eurasia. A male was reported near Hotel Rauðaskriða at Hólkotstjörn on June 12 and we were able to relocate it the next morning. We came across another male on the 15th at Hali Country Hotel.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* – Pairs were seen at Hotel Langholt and near Lake Skjálftavatn between Húsavík and Kópasker and a male was seen near Djúpvogur.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera* – A few were seen on lakes near Hotel Langholt as well as at Lake Mývatn.

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* – Fairly common and widespread, seen at multiple locations.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* – Common and widespread. Seen each day at multiple locations.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* – Seen only on June 11 near Hotel Rauðaskriða at Hólkotstjörn and at Lake Mývatn.

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca* – Fairly common and widespread. Seen at multiple locations.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* – Annual, but rare vagrant from North America. A male had been reported on a pond on the outskirts of Garður and we were able to see it on the last day of the tour.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* – Common and widespread. Seen every day of the tour but one and at multiple locations.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* – Small numbers seen near Hotel Langholt, at Lake Mývatn and surrounding area and a single bird seen on the outskirts of Selfoss.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* – Daniel spotted an adult male in flight at the Ósland Conservation Area on the outskirts of Höfn and the group was able to get distant looks at it on the water through the spotting scopes. King Eiders can be seen at any time of year along the coast of Iceland, but is most common during winter.

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* – Common (most common duck in Iceland) and widespread along the coast. Especially fun to learn about eider farms and the collection of eiderdown.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* – Best looks were on the Laxá (Salmon River) south of Lake Mývatn with additional sightings when en route.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* – Rare vagrant from North America. We came across an adult male along the coast near Eyrarbakki hanging out with an immature male White-winged Scoter that had been previously reported.

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi* – Rare vagrant from North America which had been previously reported along the coast near Eyrarbakki.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* – Small numbers seen at Lake Mývatn and along the Brunná River south of Kópasker.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* – Small numbers seen at Lake Mývatn and on the Laxá (Salmon River), a single bird in the harbor at Kópasker and a few near Djúpvogur.

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* – About three dozen were seen on a pond near Hotel Rauðaskriða and a few were seen at Lake Mývatn and on the Laxá (Salmon River).

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* – A pair was seen west of Akureyri on June 10 and another pair seen at the Laxárgljúfur Gorge the following morning.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* – Common and widespread. Seen at multiple locations along the coast.

PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS, AND ALLIES

Rock Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta* – Two (male and female) were seen as we were exiting Búðir, two across the road from where the Black Tern was seen and one at the old farmstead just down the road from the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon.

Grebes

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus* – Singles or pairs seen at multiple locations on inland bodies of water, particularly in the north at and near Lake Mývatn.

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* – First seen at Djúpvogur and then at a few other locations along the coast between there and the Eyjafjallajökull volcano. Of note, these were wild birds and not the feral variety typically seen in cities.

OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* – Common and widespread along the coast. Several birds seen at Hotel Langholt really seemed to enjoy the mowed fairways of the adjacent 9-hole golf course.

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis aprcaria* – Common and widespread. Seen each day at multiple locations. First encountered in commercial/residential areas of Keflavik on lawns, much like the American Robin in North America.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* – Common and widespread. Most notable along the coast, in particular on tidal mudflats.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* – Common and widespread. Seen each day at multiple locations.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* – A single bird was seen along the coast near Eyrarbakki. A scarce breeder in the north of Iceland, more commonly seen along the southern coast during winter.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* – Common and widespread. Seen each day at multiple locations with a high count of approximately 80 birds seen in a grassy field near Hella.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* – Seen along the coast in the southwest and the northeast in small numbers. This species does not breed in Iceland so we were seeing late migrants or possibly non-breeders.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* – Seen along the coast north of Kópasker and again on mudflats near Djúpivogur. Does not breed in Iceland and were probably late migrants.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* – Seen along the coast in the southwest, northeast and east. Again, probably late migrants.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* – Common and widespread breeder in Iceland.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* – Small numbers seen along the coast on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula and one bird seen on the beach on the walk to the gannet colony at the Rauðinúpur Cape.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* – Common and widespread breeder that was seen and heard almost everywhere we went. They were essentially ‘yard birds’ at Hotel Langaholt, Hotel Rauðaskriða and Hali Country Hotel.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* – Common and widespread breeder with largest numbers seen on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* – Common and widespread breeder that was seen and heard almost everywhere we went.

SKUAS AND JAEGERERS

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus* – One seen on territory in the northern part of the country where there is a very small breeding population.

Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* – Common and widespread breeder seen at multiple locations.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* – First encountered along the coast near Kópasker, then seen sporadically along the coast in the northeast down to the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon area.

AUKS, MURRES, AND PUFFINS

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula artica* – A single bird was seen at the Svörtuloft cliffs seabird colony, several at the gannet colony at the Rauðinúpur Cape as well as the cliffs near the Reynisfjara Beach outside of Vik. But the highlight for this species was being able to get up close, literally walking through a colony of puffins at Hafnarhólmi.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle* – Two were seen on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula along the coast at Arnarstapi, one along the beach on the hike to the Rauðinúpur Cape and three at the puffin colony at Hafnarhólmi.

Razorbill *Alca torda* – First seen in flight from the Garðskagi lighthouse, again at the Svörtuloft cliffs seabird colony and at the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon.

Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia* – Only seen at the Svörtuloft cliffs seabird colony.

Common Murre *Uria aalge* – First seen in flight from the Garðskagi lighthouse, numerous birds at the Svörtuloft cliffs seabird colony and at the Rauðinúpur Cape and a single bird was seen at the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon.

GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus* – Rare, but an annual visitor to Iceland, a first summer bird was seen with Black-headed Gulls at a wetland south of Kópasker.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* – Common and widespread along the coast where it breeds in colonies on the vertical cliffs.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* – Common and widespread along the coast where it breeds in colonies in varied habitats, but prefers wetlands.

Common Gull *Larus canus* – Small numbers seen, primarily in the north near Kópasker and a single bird was seen at the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* – Seen in small numbers at multiple locations along the coast.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* – Two were seen on a beach near Ólafsvík on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, eight along a river just south of Kópasker and one in the harbor area at Höfn.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* – Fairly common along the coast, especially in the southwest of Iceland. Relatively recent new breeder to Iceland.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* – Seen in small numbers at multiple locations on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula and near the communities of Kópasker, Höfn and Vík.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* – Seen in small numbers at multiple locations along the coast.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* – Rare to Iceland, a single bird has been showing up at the same Arctic Tern colony in northern Iceland for several years.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* – Very common and widespread along the coast where it breeds in colonies, two of which were located at Hotel Langaholt and Hali Country Hotel.

LOONS: Gaviidae

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata* – Seen nearly every day and at multiple locations around the country with a high count of seven on ponds on the outskirts of Rif.

Arctic Loon *Gavia arctica* – Rare to Iceland, a single bird has been showing up at the same location, Hólkotstjörn Lake, for several years.

Common Loon *Gavia immer* – Individuals were seen on two different lakes near Hotel Langaholt and small numbers were seen in the area around Lake Mývatn.

PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS: Procellariidae

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* – Common and widespread along the coast where it breeds in colonies on vertical cliffs, but also ventures further inland to breed on higher cliffs away from water.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* – At least eight were seen in flight from the Garðskagi lighthouse.

GANNETS AND BOOBIES: Sulidae

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* – Five were seen in flight from the Garðskagi lighthouse, another five in flight from the harbor in Kópasker and large numbers were at the colony at the Rauðinúpur Cape.

CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* – Two were seen on the last morning along the coast near Eyrarbakki.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* – Several were seen at the seabird colony at Arnarstapi and five were seen on the rocks at Ytri Tunga beach.

HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES: Accipitridae

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* – An adult bird was seen in flight on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula.

OWLS: Strigidae

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* – A single bird being chased by a Black-tailed Godwit flew in front of our vehicle on the morning of June 11 and another individual was seen in flight later in the day at a different location while we were en route.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae

Merlin *Falco columbarius* – An individual was seen perched on top of a lava mound just off of the highway on the west side of Lake Mývatn.

Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus* – The national bird of Iceland, we were fortunate to see two of these spectacular raptors.

Crows and Jays: Corvidae

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* – This was another bird that took a wrong turn and ended up in Iceland near the Hali Country Hotel where it is now a resident.

Common Raven *Corvus corax* – Common and widespread. Seen each day at multiple locations.

WRENS: Troglodytidae

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* – First heard and then seen at the Laxárgljúfur Gorge and later the same day at Lake Mývatn on the Höfði Peninsula.

STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* – Seen en route at a few locations and also seen near Selfoss and Eyrarbakki.

THRUSHES: Turdidae

Redwing *Turdus iliacus* – Common and widespread. Seen and heard each day at multiple locations.

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* – A few were seen and heard at the village of Skógar.

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHES AND CHATS: Muscicapidae

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* – Seen in the lava fields at Búðir and a few times while en route, typically in or near a lava field.

PIPITS AND WAGTAILS: Motacillidae

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* – Common and widespread. Seen each day at multiple locations.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* – Common and widespread. Seen and heard each day at multiple locations.

FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS: Fringillidae

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* – Daniel heard one singing while we were hiking in a forested area on the Höfði Peninsula of Lake Mývatn. Fortunately it stayed put and we eventually located the bird and got our bins on it.

Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea* – A few were seen and heard at Hotel Rauðaskriða, several were seen and heard on the Höfði Peninsula of Lake Mývatn and a few were seen on our hike at Skaftafell Nature Reserve.

LONGSPURS AND SNOW BUNTINGS: Calcaridae

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* – Several were seen in the rocks along the beach on the hike to Rauðinúpur Cape and at the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon.

MAMMALS:

Harbor Seal *Phoca vitulina* – Several were seen at Ytri Tunga beach and a few were seen at the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon.

Gray Seal *Halichoerus grypus* – One, possibly more were seen from the beach at Hotel Langaholt.

Arctic Fox *Vulpes lagopus* – Daniel spotted one in the road ditch while en route on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula and some of the group in the back of the vehicle were able to get a look at it as it hurried out of sight. A similar sighting occurred on the east side of the country near the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon.

Reindeer (I) *Rangifer tarandus* – A small group was first seen shortly after leaving Breiðdalsvík and more were seen a short time later a little further down the highway.