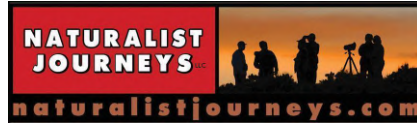


Iceland Birding & Nature | June 8-17, 2024

Trip Report | by Kent Skaggs



Guides Daniel Bergmann and Kent Skaggs, with 12 participants: Diane & Chip, Donna & Don, Kaye & Carol, Lee Ann, Jean & Gary, Kathy and Janet & David



Sat., June 8

Arrival in Iceland | Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Our journey began in southwest Iceland near the town of Keflavik. Our tour leader, Daniel Bergmann, picked up four of our party at the airport and the rest of us at our hotels. Once we were all gathered, we made a quick stop to grab some breakfast and beverages for those who had just arrived. Then we traveled a short distance to our first stop of the day which was at an eider farm along the coast just south of Sandgerði. The terrain here was relatively flat but rocky with low growing vegetation covering most of the rocks. Common Eiders were scattered throughout the area as it was nesting season. The farming aspect related to these sea ducks is for eiderdown.



Farmers protect the nesting area from predators when the eiders are present, then collect the down when it is safe to do so. Several other species were here as well including Eurasian Oystercatcher, Common Snipe, Black-headed Gull, Arctic Tern and our first Parasitic Jaeger. We continued up the road making brief stops to check some mudflats and small ponds before arriving at the Garðskagi lighthouses. This location was our best chance to see Manx Shearwaters so we set up the spotting scopes and started scanning. It wasn't long before Daniel spotted some cruising just above the waves but a ways from shore. We took turns scanning with the scopes and most were able to get brief looks at these fast moving birds. Then it was back on the road and on to Reykjavík where we would be eating lunch.

After a tasty meal in Reykjavík we settled in for a two hour drive north and west, mostly along the coast, to Hotel Langaholt which was where we would be staying for the next two nights. The skies were overcast but there was good visibility allowing us clear views of the countryside as we traveled. A short distance north of Reykjavík we encountered our first tunnel which took us beneath the seabed and the Hvalfjörður fjord. The landscape on the other side of the fjord was a little more mountainous but our route eventually took us back down to a coastal plain. As we entered the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, we paralleled mountains on our right and several small lakes as well. We continued on to the hotel to drop off the trailer we were towing that contained our luggage so we could do a little off-roading to a couple of the lakes that we had passed along the way. The first lake we checked out had lots of Red-necked Phalaropes scattered about along with a smattering of waterfowl, which were mostly Tufted Ducks. The next bodies of water were right next to the hotel. Numerous Whooper Swans were present, our first Common Shelduck, Horned Grebes, Black-tailed Godwits and several other species previously seen. We returned to the hotel to check in and get settled into our rooms before gathering again for dinner. After dinner we did our first species checklist for the tour and then turned folks loose to get some rest or enjoy more time outside in the extended daylight. It had been a very nice start to the tour and we were all anxious for more.

Sun., June 9 Snæfellsnes Peninsula

The morning greeted us with mostly sunny skies, little wind and a great view of the Snæfellsjökull Glacier from the hotel. We ate breakfast, then got ready for a day exploring the peninsula. Loaded up, we headed west toward the glacier that was beaming in the morning sun. Our first stop was just a short distance down the road at the historical hamlet of Búðir and its famous black church, Búðakirkja. We spent about 20 minutes walking around the church, soaking in the morning sunshine and enjoying the wonderful scenery that surrounded us. Then we loaded up and started back toward the highway, but didn't make it very far as a pair of Rock Ptarmigan



were spotted sitting on top of a rock not far off the road. We watched briefly from the vehicle before backing up to find a place to get out so everyone could get a better view and hopefully get some photos. It turned out that the birds were very accommodating and stayed put allowing us to get close enough for great views. We then moved on allowing the ptarmigan couple to continue to enjoy the beautiful morning.

Our next stop was at the village of Arnarstapi where there was a small seabird colony. A thriving fishing village and trading port in the past, Arnarstapi's main economic driver today is tourism and it was easy to see why with a beautiful coastline and Snæfellsjökull National Park just around the corner. To get to the seabird colony we followed a path that led us to a point where we could view the rock cliff walls from above. In front of us were Black-legged Kittiwakes, Northern Fulmars and European Shags, all clinging to their tiny perches on the vertical cliffs. We eventually moved on down the road and into the national park, stopping briefly at a visitor center to do a little shopping and then ultimately arriving at another visitor center where we had lunch.

After lunch we backtracked a bit to the Svörtuloft cliffs to check out another seabird colony. Here we found more Black-legged Kittiwakes, Razorbills, Thick-billed Murre, Common Murre and our first Atlantic Puffin. Then back on the road where we were now heading east to the coastal village of Rif. Once there, we checked out a couple of ponds on the edge of town where there were several Red-throated Loons, one of which was very close allowing for great views. There were several other familiar species here so we checked one other location before moving on to Ólafsvík where we scoped a beach to see what was there. Several species of gulls were seen including our first Iceland Gulls. As we continued east we got a quick look at our first Harlequin Ducks in a stream along the coast (we would get great looks at these beautiful birds in a couple of days).

As we continued our exploration of the peninsula, Daniel eventually took us off the pavement and into a lava field where we were hoping to find a White-tailed Eagle. A quick scan of the sky produced a large bird soaring in the distance to the east so we continued on to see if we could get a closer look. As we got closer to where the mystery bird was seen, it was relocated in the air and sure enough it was an adult White-tailed Eagle. We got out of the vehicle quickly to get a better look as it glided overhead. Fortunately it found a thermal and banked and began to ride it upward allowing us extended looks at this very large raptor. The eagle eventually moved on and so did we, but not before we enjoyed the serenity of this moss covered lava field. It was late in the afternoon so we made our way back to the highway so we could get back to the hotel for dinner. We had made a loop around the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, enjoying fantastic weather and great scenery. We ate dinner, updated the checklist and headed to our rooms to pack up our things as we would be moving on in the morning.



Mon., June 10 Drive to Akureyri

Travel day! Breakfast was at our leisure and then we returned to our rooms to gather our things. With all of the luggage back into the trailer, we set out for our next destination. But first we made a quick stop at Ytri Tunga beach to look for seals and of course, birds. It was another beautiful morning and several Harbor Seals were hauled out on rocks basking in the sunlight. Common Eiders were in the water and on the beach and a good variety of shorebirds were present as well. Eurasian Oystercatcher, Common Ringed Plover, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Snipe, Common Redshank, Ruddy Turnstone, Dunlin and Purple Sandpiper were either on the beach or in the air. We hung out for about 40 minutes before needing to get on the road as we had a long travel day ahead of us. With this in mind and after a quick stop for a bathroom break, we settled in and enjoyed watching the diverse countryside as we rolled down the highway.

As we headed in a northeasterly direction on Route 1 or the Ring Road, the clouds started to increase and soon it became completely overcast. Was our good fortune with the weather about to change? Only time would tell. Late morning we arrived in the town of Blönduós where we stopped to eat lunch. Then it was back on the road. It was still overcast when we started, but as we traveled in a more easterly direction the clouds began to break up and the sun reappeared. It wasn't long before we stopped at an undisclosed location hoping to see a special bird. Gyrfalcons had been seen in the area, presumably with a nest nearby. We got out of the vehicle to scan the skyline in hopes of seeing our largest falcon. We were in luck as one emerged from a nearby canyon and soared overhead. It stayed in the area for several minutes before eventually gliding off out of sight.

As we continued on towards Akureyri we came across our first Pink-footed Geese and a few minutes later Daniel spotted another Gyr Falcon feeding on a bird of some type not far off of the highway. Two in one day! Not long after we arrived in Akureyri where we made a brief pit stop before continuing on to Goðafoss, one of Iceland's iconic waterfalls. Fed by the Skjálfandaflljót River, Goðafoss isn't the largest waterfall in Iceland but it certainly is one of the most scenic. As it was late in the day, we continued on to where we would be staying for the next three nights, Hotel Rauðaskriða. When we arrived we were greeted by the owner who gave us the keys to our rooms. We grabbed our bags, settled in a bit and then headed to the reception/restaurant for dinner. After a great meal, we retired to our rooms to finish unpacking and to enjoy the peacefulness of our surroundings. We had covered a lot of ground on this day but we had also seen a lot more of the country. We were ready for the next part of our adventure.



Tues., June 11 Lake Myvatn

A note about our accommodations thus far. As was the case with Hotel Langaholt, Hotel Rauðaskriða is a family run operation located out in the country a ways away from any city. Along with the peaceful and picturesque settings that both hotels are located in, each had some rather unique 'yard birds'. Hotel Langaholt had an Arctic Tern colony right next to it and the fairways of their adjacent 9-hole golf course had Eurasian Oystercatchers and European Golden Plovers roaming about right outside your window. At Hotel Rauðaskriða, the European Golden Plovers were joined by Black-tailed Godwits and Whimbrels and Common Snipe were ever present at both locations.

It was another beautiful start to the day as we had mostly sunny skies and little to no wind. We ate breakfast and then headed out for the day. A short distance from the hotel we had a Short-eared Owl fly across in front of us being hotly pursued by a Black-tailed Godwit. Not far down the road, we made a quick stop to check out some waterfowl on a pond. About three dozen Barrow's Goldeneye were present, which was new for the trip, along with several Tufted Ducks, a half a dozen Greater Scaup and two pairs of Eurasian Wigeon. We continued on a short distance to Laxárgljúfur Gorge where we were hoping to find a Merlin, but none were seen. We did find a singing Eurasian Wren at this location and most of the group was able to get good looks of this bird as well.

From here we went to Hólkotstjörn which is a lake where an Arctic Loon had been a regular visitor during the spring/summer for several years. Considered rare for Iceland, this bird apparently has adopted Iceland as its summer home. We were in luck and the bird was relatively close to the road allowing us good views. While watching this bird we witnessed behavior between it and a Common Loon that was suggestive of courtship. Did it think it was a Common Loon? Only it knows for sure. Then it was on to Lake Mývatn where we took a hike through a forested area on the Höfði Peninsula. There were lots of Redwings singing and moving about the trees, as well as Common Redpolls. As we walked, Daniel heard a male Brambling singing. Fortunately it continued to sing and we were able to zero in on its location and get a look at it. Although not rare to Iceland, it's not common by any means either so it was a nice find. It was getting close to noon so we headed to Reykjahlíð which is on the northeast side of Lake Mývatn for lunch.

After getting refueled, we traveled a couple of miles away to the west side of the lake to see what we could find on the water. This was a smaller section of the lake, cove if you will, providing closer views of any birds that might be there. There was little to no wind when we arrived so the water was almost like glass. We started



scanning and found several species including Graylag Goose, Whooper Swan, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal (Eurasian form), Tufted Duck and Greater Scaup. We also had a flyby of four Common Scoters and close up views of a pair of Horned Grebes and a pair of Long-tailed Ducks, both species in full breeding plumage.

After about 45 minutes, we moved on heading toward the south end of the lake. We didn't make it very far down the highway however as Daniel saw a small bird take a pass at something on top of a lava mound. We turned around and as Daniel suspected there was a larger bird perched on top of the mound, which turned out to be a Merlin. It was very cooperative and we got extended looks from the vehicle as it preened its feathers and seemed unconcerned with this large dark creature perched next to it on the side of the road. We departed, pleased to have seen the other species of falcon likely in Iceland. Shortly thereafter we arrived at a parking area along the Laxá (Salmon River) which flows out of Lake Mývatn. We then walked along a footpath made by fisherman that paralleled the river to a small bend where we found a pair of Barrow's Goldeneye and several Harlequin Ducks. Some of the Harlequins were resting on the bank while others were in the water. We enjoyed these beautiful birds for several minutes before returning to the vehicle to get on the road to our next destination.

We arrived at our next and last stop for the day in the late afternoon. We were at an undisclosed location where there was a pair of nesting Long-tailed Jaegers, another treat that Daniel had in store for us. It didn't take long for Daniel to spot one of the birds so we got out and set up the scopes to get a better look. We watched the bird, which seemed quite content with its perch on the ground, for several minutes before needing to get back on the road to get back to our accommodations for dinner. After dinner, we caught up on the checklist for the trip and retired to our rooms to rest up for the next day.

Wed., June 12 Arctic tundra birding | Gannet colony

The start to this day was a repeat of the previous day, so we felt extremely fortunate that the weather continued to work in our favor. We ate breakfast and then headed out, this time traveling north and east along the coast. Even though the skies were clear at the hotel, as we drove north we encountered fog coming in off of the sea obscuring our view of the water. By the time we reached our first stop the fog had burned off enough to allow us to search for another bird that took a wrong turn somewhere and ended up in Iceland. This time it was a Black Tern hanging out in an Arctic Tern colony. Like the Arctic Loon we had seen the previous day, this bird had been coming to this location for several years. As we pulled up to the colony Daniel spotted the Black Tern in flight, so we all got out to take a look. As we watched the Black Tern and scanned the area for other birds, a



couple of Rock Ptarmigan were spotted on the opposite side of the road from the tern colony. We set up a scope to take a closer look before getting back on the road.

As we continued to the east we made a quick stop to scan a wetland not far off the highway where we saw a pair of Northern Shovelers among other familiar species. A little further down the road we made a quick pit stop at the Ásbyrgi Visitor Center which sits at the north end of the Ásbyrgi Canyon. The visitor center had several nice displays, including information on the diverging North American and Eurasian tectonic plates which led to the formation of Iceland. We continued on towards the village of Kópasker where we would be eating lunch. Once at Kópasker we stopped at a harbor where there were around 60 Common Eiders including several ducklings, a couple of Red-breasted Mergansers, a single Long-tailed Duck and a couple of rather tame Northern Fulmars. We also had a flyby of a Great Skua before departing for lunch.

After a really good, hearty meal, we continued north stopping briefly to look for shorebirds. Daniel was hoping we would catch some lingering Red Knots along the coast and we were in luck as we found a small group resting on the shore in a protected bay. Then it was on to Rauðínúpur Cape where there was Northern Gannet colony. After about a half hour drive we were at a farm where there was a parking area for the trailhead to the cape. The hike to get there was about 1.2 miles, with the first third over rocky terrain and the remainder going uphill. It was a bit of a grind but very much worth the trek in the end. The view was fantastic and with the sun at our back we had great light on the birds. Along with Northern Gannets, there were also Atlantic Puffin, Common Murre, Black-legged Kittiwake and Northern Fulmar nesting here. Because of the long walk our time at the colony was limited, so we headed back to the vehicle. The rocky area we had to navigate on the trail had been a bit challenging but it was also rewarding in that we encountered our first Snow Buntings at this location.

Back in the vehicle, we backtracked to Kópasker where we stopped briefly to check some wetlands just south of town that we had visited before lunch. We had been hoping to catch a Little Gull here in the morning, but were out of luck. Our persistence paid off however with the return visit as we located a single Little Gull among several Black-headed Gulls. Continuing on, we had one other bird we were hoping to find near where we had seen the Northern Shovelers in the morning. Daniel had received a heads up earlier in the day that a male Ruff had been spotted. When we arrived we set up the scopes and scanned the area. As hard as we tried, we couldn't locate the Ruff so it was on to the town of Húsavík where we would be eating dinner. After another very enjoyable meal, we headed back to our hotel. It had been another wonderful day which just made us more eager for the next.



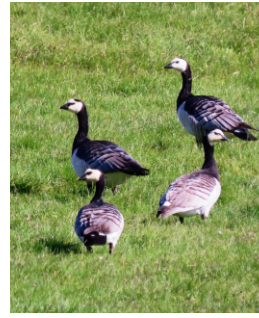
Thurs., June 13 Puffin Colony

Travel day! We had really enjoyed our stay at Hotel Rauðaskriða and exploring several areas in the northeast region of Iceland, but it was time to move on. After eating breakfast, we loaded our gear and set out to see more of the country. Before leaving the area, however, we tracked down a couple of birds that had been reported nearby the day before. The first was a Snow Goose that was hanging out with some Greylag Geese just a few miles from the hotel. The second was a male Garganey that had been seen just across the road from where we had seen the Arctic Loon. From here we proceeded back to Lake Mývatn, passing through Reykjahlíð where we made a brief stop at the Hverir Geothermal Area just east of town. There was a rather stark contrast to the relatively green, vegetated area around Lake Mývatn and the barren, albeit still beautiful, landscape before us. It was as if we had been teleported to a different planet. We checked out some of the fumaroles (steam vents) up close before continuing on the Ring Road.

Our next stop was Egilsstaðir where we ate lunch and then it was north to the coast. To the east was the Dyrfjöll Mountain Range which still had a lot of snow providing a nice contrast with the dark rock of the mountains. We stopped at a pullout to take some photos before continuing to our next destination which was the Hafnarhólmi Atlantic Puffin colony. The colony is very much a tourist attraction, but great care has been taken to avoid disturbing the puffins and the other seabirds that nest here. There are staircases and boardwalks that allow you to literally walk through the colony with birds only being a few feet away. Fortunately with today's digital cameras, photo ops are literally endless with these adorable birds. We spent an hour enjoying the birds and the wonderful scenery here before we needed to continue to our accommodations for the night. We backtracked to Egilsstaðir and continued south and east on the Ring Road through some spectacular country before finally arriving in Breiðdalsvík where we would be staying the night in Hotel Breiðdalsvík. We unloaded the luggage, found our rooms, ate dinner and caught up on the checklist before retiring for the night. It had been another beautiful day weather wise with great scenery and a very cool wildlife experience with the puffins. Iceland just kept getting better and better.

Fri., June 14 Towards Vatnajokull, Iceland's largest Glacier

We had a little later departure for this morning as we needed to load all of the luggage after breakfast and head towards our next destination. We said so long to Breiðdalsvík and hit the road. Less than an hour later we stopped at Djúpvogur where we visited a wetland on the outskirts of town. It was another gorgeous morning



which only enhanced the wonderful scenery that surrounded the town. We saw lots of familiar species and one new species, Rock Pigeon. This might not sound very exciting, but these were wild birds and not the feral pigeons we are used to, which probably meant that it was a life bird for most of the group.

We got back on the road and continued on towards Höfn where we would be eating lunch. It was on this morning that we encountered our first Reindeer which was a nice addition to our species list. Along the route we paused to take in some of the stunning views along the Lækjavik coastal area, including a close up of Eystrahorn Mountain and an elevated view of Hvalnes Beach. As we approached Stafafell we came across a large area covered with Lupine so we stopped to take some photos. Introduced to Iceland to help prevent soil erosion, Lupine is now considered to be invasive because it out-competes native plants. The scene was certainly pretty nonetheless.

Not long thereafter we arrived at the harbor town of Höfn, ate lunch and then went to the Ósland Conservation Area. From a hill that sports a memorial to local fishermen, we scanned tidal mudflats with the scopes to see what was there. There were several Eurasian Oystercatchers and other shorebirds feeding on the mudflats and there were a large number of Common Eiders on the water. As we scanned the area, Daniel had a male King Eider fly through his view. He stayed on the bird until it landed and then people lined up to the scopes to take a look. The bird was at a considerable distance, but the light was good and with persistence everyone was able to get a good look.

We then continued to where we would be staying for the next two nights, the Hali Country Hotel. Just as we arrived at the entrance road to the hotel, Daniel spotted another bird that had taken a wrong turn and ended up in Iceland. This time it was a Hooded Crow and it had been at this location for several years. Unlike the Arctic Loon and Black Tern we had seen earlier in the trip, this bird no longer migrates and has become a resident of Iceland. Apparently the bird gets fed during the winter making the decision to stay a little easier.

We checked in, got our keys and took our bags to our rooms before gathering again to head a little further down the road to visit the Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon for the first time. A major tourist destination, the lagoon is dotted with icebergs from the Breiðamerkurjökull glacier which flows from the Vatnajökull ice cap. We spent about an hour at the lagoon and the adjacent 'Diamond Beach' where the remnants of larger icebergs that made their way out to sea get washed back up onto the black sand beaches providing a rather stunning contrast. We returned to the hotel for dinner and enjoyed the rest of the evening enjoying the spectacular views from this



location before turning in. It was another fantastic day and we were looking forward to exploring the area further come morning.

Sat., June 15 Glacial Lagoons & Surrounding Area

When morning arrived there was a little bit of a change in the weather as we had low cloud cover, obscuring the tops of the mountains right next to us. Undeterred, we ate breakfast and then set out for the day. Our first stop was a return to the Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon. When we arrived the cloud cover had broken up a bit allowing some sunshine through which gave us a different perspective of the lagoon and the icebergs that had been backlit in the late afternoon sun the day before. We stayed about a half hour before moving on to the Fjallsárlón glacial lagoon and Fjallsjökull glacier just a short distance down the road. This location was on private land and little further from the highway meaning fewer tourists, but the view here was just as impressive if not more so than at Jökulsárlón.

From here we traveled just a little further down the highway where we turned onto a road that led us to an old abandoned farmstead. There was a stand of trees behind the old house where we were hoping to find a bird that had eluded us so far, the Goldcrest. There were lots of Redwings, a pair of White Wagtails, some Meadow Pipits, a Rock Ptarmigan and several displaying Common Snipe, but no Goldcrest. We moved on after about 45 minutes, heading for the Skaftafell Nature Reserve located in Vatnajökull National Park where we would eat lunch. After lunch we took a walk on a trail leading from the visitor center that passed by a campground before leading up to a scenic waterfall or a glacier if you were so inclined. Both were longer hikes than we had time for so we kept the hike short before backtracking to the visitor center. We again had been looking for a Goldcrest, but no luck.

We then started backtracking towards the hotel with a few stops along the way. The first was at the Hofskirkja Turf Church which was a historical site and then a mid-afternoon stop for coffee. After the coffee break, Daniel took us to a location that is a known breeding site for Great Skuas. We saw several including at least two that were on nests and a pair of Parasitic Jaegers that were not very happy to see us, indicating they had a nest or young nearby as well. We moved on to try one more location for the Goldcrest, but were again out of luck.

When we arrived back at the hotel, we took a road that went to the west of the lodging facilities taking us down towards the water before looping back. We stopped at a couple of ponds to check for waterfowl and shorebirds. Some Green-winged Teal that we had seen to our right took flight and as they went past Daniel noticed that



there was a male Garganey with them. Since we had marginal views of the Garganey seen earlier in the trip we were hoping to relocate this bird. We slowly drove along the road until we got to a point where we were fairly close to the shoreline along the coast. There were ducks just off shore and sure enough, the Garganey was there. We got out and set up the scopes and folks took their turn getting a good look at this rare visitor to Iceland. Then it was dinner, get caught up on the checklist and prepare to depart in the morning. It had been another fantastic day, but our journey around the country was nearing its end.

Sun., June 16 The South Coast

Morning arrived. We ate breakfast, loaded our luggage and said so long to Hali Country Hotel's Arctic Tern colony, ever present displaying Common Snipe, and resident Hooded Crow. We settled in for a bit of a drive and again soaked in the landscape as we rolled down the highway. After about an hour and a half, we stopped at the moss covered Eldhraun lava fields, took some photos and then continued on. It had been cloudy this morning but as we pulled off the highway for a brief stop just east of the village of Vik, the skies cleared and we were bathed in sunshine once again.

We proceeded on into Vik for lunch and then went to Reynisfjara Beach to check out the Reynisdrangar sea stacks or as legend has it, trolls that were turned to stone. After the black sand beach and the trolls, aah...sea stacks, we traveled a short distance down the road to the village of Skógar and walked on a trail above the village. Goldcrest was again one of our targets here as well as Eurasian Blackbird. Again, no Goldcrest, but we did find a few blackbirds. Then it was on to Skógafoss, a very impressive and scenic waterfall less than a mile away.

From Skógafoss, we traveled to a small campground near the Eyjafjallajökull volcano to try one last time for Goldcrest. Again, there were no Goldcrests which left Daniel wondering if something had occurred to cause a drop in the population in Iceland as they are usually not too hard to find. Let's hope they were just somewhere else when we went looking for them. As we departed this location, we stopped to take a group photo next to a very large puffin as it seemed like the right thing to do. We took a slight detour on our way to Hella, where we would be staying the night, looking for photogenic Icelandic Horses. We found some and the horses were very cooperative. As we headed into town we came across a grassy field that had at least 80 Black-tailed Godwits scattered across it. We tried to turn one of these birds into a Bar-tailed Godwit, but were unsuccessful. Then it was on to the Stracta Hotel in Hella. We dined and celebrated another great day in Iceland before retiring for the evening.



Mon., June 17 Departures

This would be the last day in Iceland for some of the group while others had arranged to extend their stay a little while longer. Since the earliest flight wasn't until later in the day, we made the most of the rest of our time together. After breakfast we loaded all of our belongings and set out to see what we could find, with our first stop being just outside of the town of Selfoss along the Ölfusá River. There were good numbers of Whooper Swans and Tufted Ducks here along with a few other species of ducks, a few shorebird species and several Black-headed Gulls.

Then we checked a couple of areas along the coast near the village of Eyrarbakki. At the first stop, Daniel spotted a couple of Great Cormorants perched on a distant rock, so we got them in the scopes to get a better look. We continued scanning the shoreline to see if we could find something new when Daniel did just that, finding a Eurasian Curlew hiding in plain sight. The bird was relatively close but we got it in the scopes as well. Moving a little further to the west, we checked out an area where an immature male White-winged Scoter had been recently reported. There were rafts of Common Eiders to sort through, but persistence paid off and eventually we found it hanging out with a male Surf Scoter which had not been reported. Both birds were diving for food, so this made seeing them in the scopes a bit of a challenge, but eventually everyone was able to see both birds.

From here we headed to Keflavik and then north to the town of Garður where a male Ring-necked Duck had been reported. Upon arrival at the pond where it had been seen, a quick scan did not come up with the bird so we moved to another vantage point and tried again. Daniel quickly found the bird but it was diving near some Tufted Ducks that were also diving making us work a little for a good view. Satisfied, we headed back to Keflavik where we would have our last meal together as a group.

After a very good meal, we made our way to the airport a short distance away. We said our goodbyes and wished each other well. It had been a fantastic 10 days exploring Iceland. From the spectacular, sometimes other worldly scenery to the fantastic food and wonderful birds and the great company, this trip will be remembered fondly to the end of our days. A big thank you to Daniel for sharing his extensive knowledge about his country and for setting up a great itinerary. Hope to see everyone again on another adventure with Naturalist Journeys.

Photos: Group (Kent Skaggs - KS), Icelandic Horse (KS), Skógafoss (KS), Arctic Tern (KS), Reindeer (KS), Atlantic Puffin (KS), Common Eider (KS), Lake Lýsuvatn Scenic (KS), Female and male Rock Ptarmigan (KS), New lighthouse at Garðskagi (KS), Northern Fulmar (KS), Tufted Duck (KS), Scenic (Donna Cooper - DC), Red-throated Loon (KS), Common Redshank (KS), Harbor Seal (KS), View inland from Ytri Tunga (KS), Gyrfalcon (KS), Goðafoss (DC), Höfði Peninsula at Lake Mývatn (KS), Red-necked Phalarope (KS), Long-tailed Duck (KS), Merlin (KS), Laxá (Salmon River) (KS), Harlequin Ducks (KS), Common Redshank (Carol Pierce - CP), Red Knots (KS), Rauðinúpur Cape (KS), Northern Gannets (KS), Snow Bunting (KS), Little Gull (KS), Hverir Geothermal Area (KS), Borgarfjörður Harbor/Hafnarhólmi (KS), Atlantic Puffin (KS), Northern Fulmar (KS), Eystrahorn Mountain (KS), Reindeer (KS), Lupine (DC), Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon (KS), Black-legged Kittiwakes & Lesser Black-backed Gulls (KS), Great Skua (KS), Skógar Village (KS), Skógafoss (KS)