

Iceland: Birding & Nature | Species List

June 13 – 23, 2023 | with Naturalist Journeys



With guides **Daniel Bergmann and Dave Mehlman** and participants:
Brenda, Candice, Daphne, John, Mark, Merri, Paul, Peter, Sandra, Susan, Tim, and Tim

Compiled by Dave Mehlman

“The Puffin made me do it!”

(G) = guides only, not seen by the tour participants.

eBird trip report: [Naturalist Journeys Iceland June 2023 - eBird Trip Report](#)

BIRDS (79 species recorded, of which 1 was seen by guides only):

DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae (23)

Graylag Goose *Anser anser*—Found on seven days of the tour at most inland wetland sites and sometimes in fields while driving

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*—One individual at Bakkatjörn, the very first birding stop of the tour, where quite unexpected; several small flocks seen on the drive on F35 over the highlands at a distance

Barnacle Goose *Branta bernicla*—Two pair seen on the first visit to Ytri Tunga; unusual at this date at this location

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*—One of the more commonly species of the tour, found on eight days, often while driving

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*—Only found on the first day at Bakkatjörn where there were a pair with two chicks

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*—A few seen in the pond at the first visit to Ytri Tunga

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*—Not a common species in Iceland, these were seen at three sites on two days; first was at the Bakkatjörn near Reykjavík on the first day, and then it was found at Vestmannsvatn and Mývatn on the same day

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*—Seen at several sites on three days, by far the most abundant at the bird museum, Mývatn

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*—Frequently encountered, though not that numerous; seen on eight days

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*—Only found on one day, a female in the river at Daufhylur with a large flock of Barrow’s Goldeneye

Eurasian [Green-winged] Teal *Anas crecca*—Found on three days in small numbers at Tjarnir, Mývatn, and Raesi; the taxonomy and naming of this species is confusing; the North American form, Green-winged Teal, is *A. carolinensis* or *A. crecca carolinensis* and has distinctly different white striping from the Eurasian Teal *A. crecca* or *A. crecca crecca*

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*—Seen twice on the tour, first on the second visit to Lýsuvatn and again at Ræsi near Sellfoss

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*—Easily the most common, frequently seen, and widespread waterfowl species of the tour, these were found on seven days of the tour at virtually all water bodies visited, except the ocean

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*—Encountered on five days of the tour at several lakes and ponds, though not nearly as numerous as the preceding species

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*—A rare bird in Iceland, we found these twice, first at Tjarnir near Rif and again at Ræsi near Sellfoss; hard to pick out from the far more numerous Tufted Ducks

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*—One found roosting on the beach on the second visit to Ytri Tunga

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*—Seen almost daily throughout the tour though generally in or near salt water; numerous downy chicks were also seen, along with adult males and females

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*—Arguably one of the most attractive ducks anywhere, these were seen on three days, first in the ocean at the Búlandshöfði overlook, then a few in the Laxá River near Mývatn, and a very large roosting flock at Þingvellir

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*—Small numbers of this lovely species, which has distinctly different breeding and non-breeding plumages, were seen on three days; probably the best views were of a pair in the Laxá River near Mývatn

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*—Only seen near the bird museum at Mývatn

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*—While only found on two days, we had great views of this species on those days at several areas near Mývatn, including in the Laxá River, and an incredible aggregation of 51 birds, mostly males, at Daufhylur near the hydropower dam

Common Merganser [Goosander] *Mergus merganser*—Several seen in the river and among the rocks at the Laxárgljúfur hydropower dam

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*—Regularly seen throughout the first half of the tour at many sites visited

PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS, AND ALLIES: Phasianidae (1)

Rock Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta*—Seen on three days of the tour on the western end of the Snæfellsness, while driving one day, at (probably the best view of the tour) at Þingvellir National Park right before we boarded the van to return; although in their mostly brown breeding season plumage, the birds show obvious white wings when flying which makes it easier to pick them out over the lava fields

GREBES: Podicipedidae (1)

Horned [Slavonian] Grebe *Podiceps auritus*—Recorded on three days of the tour at various lakes and ponds visited

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (1)

Rock Pigeon [Rock Dove] *Columba livia*—Seen on the first day in the Reykjavík area and again on Heimaey; presumably wild, non-introduced birds, so technically this constituted a life bird for the North Americans in the group who had never traveled to the Old World before!

RAILS, GALLINULES, AND COOTS: Rallidae (1)

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*—Unusual in Iceland, one was at Kaldbakstjarnir where it sat on the shore for great views

OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae (1)

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*—A widespread species in Iceland, these were seen on eight days of the tour at most sites visited, except for higher elevations

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charariidae (2)

European Golden-Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*—Found on seven days of the tour, generally in small numbers, at many sites; in its beautiful breeding season plumage

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*—Regularly encountered at coastal sites visited; found on six days of the tour

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (8)

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*—These were often seen as individuals or pairs, many times flying overhead, at most appropriate grassy sites on eight days of the tour; these were all the European subspecies that has a white wedge on the back, as opposed to the North American subspecies (which might be a separate species, Hudsonian Whimbrel, some day!) that does not

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*—This large and dramatically colored wader was recorded on eight days at many sites at or near the coast or with coastal grasslands; very noticeable was an aggregation of over 40 individuals in one of the lagoons near Akureyri

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*—One bird seen in the rocks at Kópasker harbor

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*—Found on the first three days of the tour at sites visited near Reykjavík and on the Snæfellsness and again at Ræsi on the last day; a species unfortunately named after its dull-colored non-breeding season plumage

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*—A very mis-named species, at least in the breeding season, these were seen on two days, first at Grundarfjörður on the north coast of the Snæfellsness and again on the second visit to Ytri Tunga

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*—Widespread and seen or heard on eight days of the tour; they were often performing their acrobatic mating display flights far overhead

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*—Regularly found (7 days) on the tour in many lakes and ponds; this species exhibits a reversed sexual mating system where the males tend the nests and the female is more colorful

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*—A conspicuous and showy (and sometimes noisy!) shorebird, found on every day of the tour in most open habitats

SKUAS AND JAEGER: Stercorariidae (2)

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*—One seen briefly by some in the group in the harbor at Kópasker and a few seen by most in the group from the Vestmannaeyjar ferry

Parasitic Jaeger [Arctic Skua] *Stercorarius parasiticus*—This elegant species, a predator though closely related to the gulls, was seen on eight days of the tour, mostly when flying by, but sometimes perched; almost all birds were dark morphs

AUKS, MURRES, AND PUFFINS: Alcidae (5)

Common Murre [Common Guillemot] *Uria aalge*—Found on two days, both from the whale watching boat (where they were floating in the water and flying by in flocks) and on the cliffs at Svörtuloft (where they were nesting) and again on the Vestmannaeyjar, where they were seen from the ferry and from land; at least one individual at Svörtuloft was of the Bridled form

Thick-billed Murre [Brünnich's Guillemot] *Uria lomvia*—Found with the scopes nesting on the cliffs at Svörtuloft

Razorbill *Alca torda*—Seen from the whale watching boat (where they were floating in the water) and on the cliffs at Svörtuloft (where they were nesting) and while on Heimaey

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*—This small alcid was seen at several sites on two days, usually on the ocean water; found on our visit to the north coast of the Snæfellsness and when visiting

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula artica*—A favorite of visitors to Iceland, we saw these many times, but only on four days; several nesting sites were visited on the Snæfellsness, in North Iceland, and in Vestmannaeyjar; we also saw them in the water from the boats for the whale watching trip

GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (10)

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*—This gull was found on five days at sites by the coast and on the boat trips we took

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*—Easily the most common and widespread gull of the tour, these were found almost everywhere we visited, except in the interior highlands, often in large numbers; recorded on eight days of the tour

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*—A great bird for the tour, seen by a few in the group at Núpasveit on the day we went up north

Common Gull *Larus canus*—Recorded on two days, first on late afternoon outing to Kjarnaskógur and again in the Kópasker harbor; this species was formerly considered the Mew Gull before it was split from the North American Short-billed Gull (*L. brachyrhynchus*)

Herring Gull (European) *Larus argentatus*—Recorded on four days at Bakkatjörn, at the puffin colony on the headland west of Öxarfjörður, Ræsi, and Garðskagi; these were presumably the European Herring Gull, *L. a. argentatus*; the American Herring Gull (*L. a. smithsonianus*) of North America is considered a separate species by some authorities

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*—Only seen once, at the Oláfsvík harbor when returning from the whale watching

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*—We saw these on the first two and last three days of the tour at most sites visited during those days

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*—The large, all-white, gull was found at Bakkatjörn on the first day, during the next two days at several locations on the Snæfellsnes, and at Garðskagi, the very last site visited

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*—Typically found by salt water, these were seen on six days of the tour

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*—A widespread species in Iceland, seen on all days except during the drive from north to south; many nesting colonies were seen in grass beside the roads and highways

LOONS: Gaviidae (3)

Red-throated Loon [Red-throated Diver] *Gavia stellata*—The most readily encountered loon species in Iceland, we saw these lovely birds at ponds all over the Snæfellsnes, at a few places in north Iceland, and (probably in the highest density) at the Flói Bird Reserve

Arctic Loon [Black-throated Diver] *Gavia arctica*—Unusual in Iceland, one was seen in Vestmannaavatn

Common Loon [Great Northern Diver] *Gavia immer*—This diver was seen on four days at several sites with ponds and occasionally in the ocean, sometimes in conjunction with Red-throated

PETRALS AND SHEARWATERS: Procellariidae (2)

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*—A common and regularly seen species on the tour, often over or near the ocean and many times seen at nests on cliffs; most memorable was the large feeding aggregation feasting on the fish-packing plant outflow on Heimaey

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*—Seen on two days, first from the Vestmannaeyjar ferry and again from Garðskagi at the very last birding stop before heading to lunch and the airport

GANNETS AND BOOBIES: Sulidae (1)

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*—A near-shore oceanic species, we saw a few on the whale watching trip, at several sites on the Vestmannaeyjar and on the ferry there and back, and at Garðskagi

CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (2)

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*—Seen on three days of the tour, exclusively along coasts, at Borgarfjörður on the first day, at several places on the north coast of the Snæfellsnes, and at Garðskagi, the very last stop of the tour (a tour bookend bird!)

European Shag *Gulosus aristotelis*—This coastal species was seen on the first three days of the tour, including from Olafsvík during the whale watching trip and at several places on the north coast of the Snæfellsnes

HAWKS, KITES, AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (1)

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*—One individual seen on a nest on an island at a distance at a secure, undisclosed location in northern Iceland

OWLS: Strigidae (1)

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*—(G) Seen by Daniel one evening when returning from Akureyri to Lamb Inn

FALCONS: Falconidae (2)

Merlin *Falco columbarius*—A pair seen well by the entire group on the cliffs at the Laxárgljúfur hydropower dam was complemented by a drive-by perching bird seen only by Peter they day before

Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus*—Considered a sensitive species in Iceland and felt by Daniel to be declining, perhaps due to avian flu, we saw these apex avian predators on two days, once in the north and again while driving near Mývatn

CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (1)

Common Raven *Corvus corax*—Regularly seen throughout the tour, often while driving; reported on five days

KINGLETS: Regulidae (1)

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*—Seen twice, both times in forested habitats: first, at our lovely picnic site Skógræktarfélag near Stykkishólmur and again on the late afternoon walk in the Kjarnaskógur forest near Akureyri the following day

WRENS: Troglodytidae (1)

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*—This Eurasian relative of the North American Winter and Pacific Wrens was found at the puffin colony on the headland to the west of the Öxarfjörður, in Asbyrgi Canyon, and during the walk in Þingvellir National Park

STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae (1)

European (Common) Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*—In Iceland a native species, we recorded these familiar birds on three days of the tour at the beginning and three more at the end.

THRUSHES: Turdidae (3)

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*—A frequently seen songbird, we found these on eight days of the tour at many sites, especially those with some trees present; often heard singing

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*—Seen on two days of the tour

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*—Seen by some in the group flying through the woods at Kjarnaskógur outside Akureyri

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHES: Muscicapidae (1)

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*—Seen while driving through the lava fields near Svörtuloft at the west tip of the Snæfellsnes and again the next day when in the lava fields near Hraunsfjörður

PIPITS AND WAGTAILS: Motacillidae (2)

White [Pied] Wagtail *Motacilla alba*—One of the few species seen on every single day of the tour; easy to recognize due to its long tail and distinctive flight

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*—This elegant species was frequently encountered on the tour; found on eight days at most sites visited

FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS: Fringillidae (1)

Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*—Infrequently found on this tour; only seen quickly at our picnic area near Stykkishólmur, at Kjarnaskógur outside Akureyri, and at the bird museum at Mývatn

LONGSPURS AND SNOW BUNTINGS: Calcariidae (1)

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*—Seen by Daniel and Dave from the front of the van at the west end of the Snæfellsnes and by the whole group at Núpasveit in the far north and at Hveravellir, where one very kindly perched on the information sign to welcome us

MAMMALS (4 species)

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Arctic Fox *Alopex lagopus*—An adult seen running across the lava fields on the west end of the Snæfellsnes and another, sadly hit by a car, on the road one day while driving.

Harbor Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*—Seen on both visits to Ytri Tunga on the south coast of the Snæfellsnes

Harbor Seal *Phoca vitulina*—Two seen by Daphne and Dave from the Herjólfur on the return trip from Vestmannaeyar

Sperm Whale *Physeter macrocephalus*—At least four seen from the boat during the whale watching trip from Ólafsvík

FLOWERING PLANTS (26 species; incomplete list)

Angelica archangelica, Garden angelica

Anthriscus sylvestris, Cow Parsley

Arabidopsis lyrata, Lyreleaf Rockcress
Armeria maritima, Sea Thrift
Bartsia alpina, Velvetbells
Betula pubescens, Downy Birch
Caltha palustris, marsh marigold
Cardamine polemonioides, northern field bittercress
Dryas octopetala, Eight-petal Mountain-Avens
Geranium sylvaticum, wood crane's-bill
Geum rivale, Water Avens
Lupinus nootkatensis, Nootka Lupine
Myosotis arvensis, field forget-me-not
Pinguicula vulgaris, Common Butterwort
Pyrola minor, lesser wintergreen
Ranunculus acris, meadow buttercup
Salix lanata, Woolly Willow
Sambucus racemosa, red-berried elder
Silene acaulis, Moss Champion
Silene dioica, red champion
Silene uniflora, Sea Champion
Sorbus aucuparia, European mountain ash
Thymus praecox, Mother of Thyme
Tofieldia pusilla, Scottish Asphodel
Vaccinium uliginosum, bog bilberry
Viola tricolor, Wild Pansy

LOCATIONS AND NOTES:

Day 1: Tuesday, June 13; Bakkatjörn (Reykjavík), south end Borgarfjörður bridge, Ytri Tunga (Snæfellsness south shore), Lýsuvatn (pond near Kast Guesthouse)
Day 2: Wednesday, June 14; Ólafsvík, whale watching boat trip, Tjarnir pond near Rif, Svörtuloft (western end Snæfellsness)
Day 3: Thursday, June 15; Snæfellsness north shore (Búlandshöfði overlook, Grundarfjörður, Kolgrafafjörður, Hraunsfjörður, Skógræktarfélag, Stykkishólmur), Ytri Tunga, Lýsuvatn
Day 4: Friday, June 16; travel, Snæfellsness to Akureyri, Kjarnaskógur (Akureyri)
Day 5: Saturday, June 17; Vestmannsvatn, Mývatn
Day 6: Sunday, June 18;
Day 7: Monday, June 19; F35 road, north to south; Hveravellir, Gulfoss
Day 8: Tuesday, June 20; Vestmannaeyjar (Westmans' Islands); ferry and sites on Heimay
Day 9: Wednesday, June 21; Þingvellir National Park, Eyrarbakki, Flói Bird Reserve
Day 10: Thursday, June 22; Ræsi (near Selfoss), Garðskagi (Reykjanes Peninsula)