

ICELAND

'Several months ago it seemed that Iceland was on everyones lips, or at least a certain unpronounceable volcano was...and as so many people were suffering from cancelled flights and delays I just kept hoping that it wouldn't affect Sunbirds 4th modern day tour to the country. Thankfully it didn't, and by the time of our visit the volcano was also behaving but such is the nature of this country, that's why it's so exciting. It's ever changing, it allows you to see (and understand far more than I ever did in a geography lesson!) what is going on with the world. From bubbling mud pools, to dramatic geysirs, and thundering waterfalls to the bizarre feeling of standing on ground between two tectonic plates, it really is an amazing country. Of course this was a bird tour but we still took time to enjoy these natural wonders, but did we see any birds....The answer to that is yes we did, recording more species than ever on a 9 day trip with spectacular breeding species such as Barrow's Goldeneyes, Harlequin Ducks, Great northern and Red-throated Divers, Slavonian Grebes, Red-necked and Grey (Red) Phalaropes, Ptarmigan and Snow Bunting vying for our attention with vagrants from the north and west including Snow Goose, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, both King and Steller's Eiders, Little Gull, Snowy Owl and Long-tailed Skua. Breeding seabirds were also high on the list and few will forget the evening spent at Latrabjarg, where hundreds of thousands of auks breed. The Puffins are close enough to touch (although with a bill like that you wouldn't want to!) and the cliffs are lined with rank after rank of Brunnich's and Common Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes with smaller numbers of Black Guillemots dotted around. As were looked out to sea there were lines of auks going everywhere, 24 hours of frantic feeding activity before they head out to sea to sit out the winter in conditions that most be so unpleasant! In fact if our week was anything to go by they weren't preparing very well, the sun was shining, it was short sleeve weather on one day (thankfully our day on Flatey, which made the birding, and the difficult choice of apple cake or chocolate and date cake with hot caramel sauce all the more bearable!)

Other avian highlights came in the form of roding Eurasian Woodcocks, singing Redwings and the local Wrens (they are monsters!), Common Redpolls, a Gyr Falcon perched next to the road, copying what a Merlin had done a few days earlier, several White-tailed Eagles, stacks and stacks of breeding shorebirds from *islandica* Black-tailed Godwits and Eurasian Whimbrels to European Golden Plovers and noisy Common Redshanks. We saw thousands of Arctic Terns, hundreds of Whooper Swans, Pink-footed Geese with chicks, Purple Sandpipers, Glaucous Gulls, Short-eared Owl, Common Crossbills and so much more....

We did particularly well for mammals on this trip, with Minke Whales seen on many days, Harbour Porpoise and White-beaked Dolphins also making an appearance. Mammal of the trip was never voted on but the site of 7 Orcas on our second day, close inshore and initially breaching fully out of the water was going to be a clear winner, until Yann saw an Arctic Fox running along the beach in the north, although distant it was a real treat. In fact this was something that Yann was particularly good at, finding time and time again quality birds (and mammals), and seemingly never tiring! He not only drove us for many hundreds of km's, knew all the key sites, made sure we never went hungry and was able to answer all our questions, once again he made the leaders job a dream!' – *James Lidster*.

BIRD LIST:

- Column A = Number of days this species has been recorded
- Column B = Number of days this species was seen on the last tour.
- Column C = Maximum daily count for this species on the last tour.
- H = Heard only

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A	B	C		
4	Great Northern Diver	6	5	<i>Gavia immer</i>
4	Red-throated Diver	7	10	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
4	Slavonian Grebe	3	10	<i>Podiceps auritus.</i>
4	Northern Fulmar	8	2000	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
4	Manx Shearwater	1	15	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>
3	European Storm-petrel	1	4	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>
4	Northern Gannet	2	100	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
4	Great Cormorant	7	10	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
4	Shag	3	20	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
4	Whooper Swan	8	700	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
4	Pink-footed Goose	2	250	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>
4	Greylag Goose	9	2000	<i>Anser anser</i>
1	Snow Goose	1	1	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>
1	Pale-bellied' Brent Goose	1	4	<i>Branta bernical hrota</i>
4	Common Shelduck	1	80	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
4	Eurasian Wigeon	5	300	<i>Anas penelope</i>
1	American Wigeon			<i>Anas americana</i>
4	Gadwall	1	20	<i>Anas strepera</i>
4	Eurasian Teal	5	4	<i>Anas crecca</i>
1	Blue-winged Teal	1	1	<i>Anas discors</i>
4	Mallard	9	20	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
4	Northern Pintail	2	20	<i>Anas acuta</i>
4	Northern Shoveler	1	1	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
4	Tufted Duck	7	3000	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
1	Common Pochard	1	2	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
4	Greater Scaup	3	200	<i>Aythya marila</i>
2	Ring-necked Duck	1	1	<i>Aythya collaris</i>
4	Common Eider	9	2000	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
3	King Eider	1	1	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>
4	Steller's Eider	1	1	<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>
4	Harlequin Duck	5	40	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>
4	Long-tailed Duck	3	30	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
4	Common Scoter	1	20	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
4	Barrow's Goldeneye	1	20	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>
2	Common Goldeneye	1	1	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
4	Red-breasted Merganser	7	50	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
2	Goosander			<i>Mergus merganser</i>
4	White-tailed Eagle	3	3	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
4	Gyr Falcon	1	1	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>
4	Merlin	5	1	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
4	Rock Ptarmigan	7	3	<i>Lagopus muta</i>
1	Eurasian Coot			<i>Fulica atra</i>
4	Oystercatcher	8	100	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
4	Ringed Plover	8	10	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
4	Golden Plover	8	100	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
4	Dunlin	8	100	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
4	Red Knot	1	1	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
2	Sanderling			<i>Calidris alba</i>
4	Purple Sandpiper	4	25	<i>Calidris maritima</i>
4	Common Snipe	9	70	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
1	Eurasian Woodcock	1	2	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
4	'Icelandic" Black-tailed Godwit	7	20	<i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>

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4	Whimbrel	9	50		<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
1	Eurasian Curlew				<i>Numenius arquata</i>
4	Common Redshank	9	200		<i>Tringa totanus</i>
4	Ruddy Turnstone	1	6		<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
4	Red-necked Phalarope	7	100		<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
4	Grey Phalarope	1	2		<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>
4	Arctic Skua	9	10		<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
3	Long-tailed Skua	1	1		<i>Stercorarius longicaudas</i>
4	Great Skua	3	6		<i>Stercorarius skua</i>
4	Black-headed Gull	9	100		<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
4	Common Gull	3	10		<i>Larus canus</i>
2	Ring-billed Gull				<i>Larus delawarensis</i>
4	Lesser Black-backed Gull	9	500		<i>Larus fuscus</i>
4	Herring Gull	6	20		<i>Larus argentatus</i>
3	Iceland Gull				<i>Larus glaucoides</i>
4	Glaucous Gull	8	100		<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
4	Great Black-backed Gull	9	200		<i>Larus marinus</i>
2	Little Gull	1	1		<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>
4	Kittiwake	7	3000		<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
4	Arctic Tern	9	3000		<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
4	Auk sp	1	15000		<i>Alcidae sp</i>
4	Razorbill	3	500		<i>Alca torda</i>
4	Brünnich's Guillemot	1	50		<i>Uria lomvia</i>
4	Common Guillemot	4	2000		<i>Uria aalge</i>
4	Black Guillemot	5	30		<i>Cephus grylle</i>
4	Puffin	5	1000		<i>Fratercula arctica</i>
4	Snowy Owl	1	1		<i>Bubo scandiacus</i>
2	Short-eared Owl	2	1		<i>Asio flammeus</i>
1	Barn Swallow				<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
4	Meadow Pipit	9	50		<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
4	White Wagtail	9	15		<i>Motacilla alba</i>
4	Wren	1	1	H	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
4	Northern Wheatear	6	10		<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
4	Blackbird	1	1		<i>Turdus merula</i>
4	Redwing	9	50		<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
4	Goldcrest	1	2	H	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
4	Common Raven	9	20		<i>Corvus corax</i>
4	Starling	6	20		<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
4	'Icelandic' Common Redpoll	6	15		<i>Carduelis flammea</i>
1	Eurasian Siskin				<i>Carduelis spinus</i>
2	Red Crossbill	1	2		<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
1	Lapland Bunting				<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>
4	Snow Bunting	5	10		<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>