

ICELAND

'What Iceland lacks in total number of species it more than makes up for in the quality of the species as well as the sheer numbers of certain species. During our ten day tour we recorded all the specialities and had incredible views of some stunning birds. The quality came in the form of amazing views of Gyr Falcon, an adult female approached to within 50 metres; a Snowy Owl sat on a warm sunny afternoon in the middle of nowhere; an adult female Steller's Eider, a distant King Eider, Ring-billed and Little Gulls (both scarce in Iceland), 3 adult Long-tailed Skuas, a flock of drake Harlequin Ducks at close range, rafts of Barrow's Goldeneye, Grey (Red) Phalaropes, Red-necked Phalaropes that were too close to focus a camera on! The latter species would also have featured under the quantity heading as well with one lake holding several hundred. Nearby we had large flocks of Arctic Terns, always humbling to realize how far these birds will travel to their wintering grounds in Antarctica. The seabird cliffs at Latrabjarg were spectacular again, with an eerie quality thrown over them by the low lying mist. Tens of thousands of auks were busy feeding young, with flock after flock continuously whizzing out to sea. In among the auks we enjoyed great views of Brunnich's Guillemot, sat within metres of a Black Guillemot as it returned to its nest hole, a real privilege.

Some encounters were equally memorable, the pair of Snow Buntings feeding below us on Flatey (an island in itself that was stunningly beautiful, and great carrot cake!), the experience with two Arctic Skuas and a pair of Whimbrel in some equally stunning scenery. A couple of pairs of White-tailed Eagles, herds of Whooper Swans, Pink-footed Geese with chicks, Great Skuas, Puffins at two metres distance, Long-tailed Ducks, Slavonian Grebes (the adult pair with stripey young on their back being particular favourites), Manx Shearwaters, singing Redwing, Eurasian Merlins, Common Redpolls and all those incredibly showy waders lining the road from Common Redshank and European Golden Plovers to the local race of Black-tailed Godwit and noisy Oystercatchers.

Our two whale watching trips were of mixed success, the first from Olafsvik provided us with great looks at White-beaked Dolphins, which we watched for an hour but no whales. From Husavik we missed out on Blue Whale, seen the day before our trip, but still enjoyed close up encounters with Humpback and Minke Whales. Our luck ran out after that, or did it? Our boat had slight engine trouble and while we waited for assistance from the harbour we drank hot chocolate, ate cinnamon buns and sat on a mirror calm sea with Puffins, Northern Fulmars and beautiful scenery all around us.

I cant think of one day where we didn't enjoy spectacular scenery, with numerous stops for photos. We were particularly lucky with the weather and enjoyed eight days of great light, blue skies and light winds. We took time to enjoy some of Icelands natural wonders including the stinky, sulphur pools, pseudo craters, geyser, Pingvellir (where the tectonic plates are pulling apart creating some of the newest land on the planet – humbling again!), waterfalls including the mighty Dettifoss, the most powerful waterfall in Europe.

The success once again of our Iceland tour is undoubtedly due to the local knowledge and expertise of our local guide Yann Kolbeinsson. We were well looked after from start to finish, driven superbly on some long drives, never went hungry and got the impression that there were few birds in Iceland that we didn't know about or actually see during our trip, brilliant!'
-James Lidster.

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Bird List:

This is a list of all the species seen during the last two tours to Iceland.

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

A		B	C	
2	Great Northern Diver	6	6	<i>Gavia immer</i>
2	Red-throated Diver	6	50	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
2	Slavonian Grebe	5	30	<i>Podiceps auritus.</i>
2	Northern Fulmar	10	500	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
2	Manx Shearwater	1	4	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>
1	European Storm-petrel			<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>
2	Northern Gannet	6	50	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
2	Great Cormorant	7	30	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
2	Shag	3	10	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
2	Whooper Swan	7	440	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
2	Pink-footed Goose	2	100	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>
2	Greylag Goose	9	300	<i>Anser anser</i>
2	Common Shelduck	1	280	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
2	Eurasian Wigeon	5	50	<i>Anas penelope</i>
2	Gadwall	2	20	<i>Anas strepera</i>
2	Teal	3	10	<i>Anas crecca</i>
2	Mallard	9	10	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
2	Northern Pintail	1	3	<i>Anas acuta</i>
2	Northern Shoveler	1	5	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
2	Tufted Duck	10	3000	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
2	Greater Scaup	5	500	<i>Aythya marila</i>
1	Ring-necked Duck			<i>Aythya collaris</i>
2	Common Eider	9	4000	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
2	King Eider	1	1	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>
2	Steller's Eider	1	1	<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>
2	Harlequin Duck	5	20	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>
2	Long-tailed Duck	2	50	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
2	Common Scoter	2	50	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
2	Barrow's Goldeneye	2	600	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>
1	Common Goldeneye	1	1	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
2	Red-breasted Merganser	9	20	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
1	Goosander			<i>Mergus merganser</i>
2	White-tailed Eagle	2	4	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
2	Gyr Falcon	2	3	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>
2	Merlin	5	4	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
2	Rock Ptarmigan	2	10	<i>Lagopus mutus</i>
2	Oystercatcher	9	30	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
2	Ringed Plover	9	20	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>

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2	Golden Plover	9	30		<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
2	Dunlin	9	100		<i>Calidris alpina</i>
2	Red Knot	3	160		<i>Calidris canutus</i>
2	Sanderling	1	45		<i>Calidris alba</i>
2	Purple Sandpiper	5	10		<i>Calidris maritima</i>
2	Common Snipe	10	20		<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
2	'Icelandic" Black-tailed Godwit	6	30		<i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>
2	Whimbrel	9	50		<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
1	Eurasian Curlew				<i>Numenius arquata</i>
2	Common Redshank	10	100		<i>Tringa totanus</i>
2	Ruddy Turnstone	2	5		<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
2	Red-necked Phalarope	9	300		<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
2	Grey Phalarope	1	2		<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>
2	Arctic Skua	9	20		<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
1	Long-tailed Skua	1	3		<i>Stercorarius longicaudas</i>
2	Great Skua	2	3		<i>Stercorarius skua</i>
2	Black-headed Gull	10	100		<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
2	Common Gull	4	30		<i>Larus canus</i>
2	Ring-billed Gull	1	1		<i>Larus delawarensis</i>
2	Lesser Black-backed Gull	10	100		<i>Larus fuscus</i>
2	Herring Gull	8	20		<i>Larus argentatus</i>
2	Iceland Gull	3	4		<i>Larus glaucoides</i>
2	Glaucous Gull	8	200		<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
2	Great Black-backed Gull	9	200		<i>Larus marinus</i>
1	Little Gull	2	1		<i>Hydrocoleus minutus</i>
2	Kittiwake	10	1000		<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
2	Arctic Tern	10	1000		<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
2	Auk sp	4	10000		<i>Alcidae sp</i>
2	Razorbill	5	50		<i>Alca torda</i>
2	Brünnich's Guillemot	3	50		<i>Uria lomvia</i>
2	Common Guillemot	5	1000		<i>Uria aalge</i>
2	Black Guillemot	7	20		<i>Cephus grylle</i>
2	Puffin	6	250		<i>Fratercula arctica</i>
2	Snowy Owl	1	1		<i>Nyctea scandiaca</i>
2	Meadow Pipit	10	50		<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
2	White Wagtail	10	10		<i>Motacilla alba</i>
2	Wren	1	1	H	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
2	Northern Wheatear	5	3		<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
2	Blackbird	1	3		<i>Turdus merula</i>
2	Redwing	10	50		<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
2	Goldcrest	1	2		<i>Regulus regulus</i>
2	Common Raven	9	10		<i>Corvus corax</i>
2	Starling	5	30		<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
2	'Icelandic" Common Redpoll	5	20		<i>Carduelis flammea</i>
1	Eurasian Siskin	1	3		<i>Carduelis spinus</i>
2	Snow Bunting	6	3		<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>