

Trip Report — Iceland 2024

June 7, 2024 to June 16, 2024
Guided by Cory Gregory



Godafoss, which translates to The Falls of the Gods, was indeed very impressive! This fantastic long-exposure photo was taken by participant Donna Pomeroy.

Breathtaking. Unique. Isolated. Northern. All these things describe the island nation of Iceland. It's hard to put into words, really, what Iceland is truly like. Our group spent more than a week enjoying the many reasons Iceland is such a destination for birders and adventurers alike! The memories we made were many, the photos we took even more numerous, but after it's all said and done, it was the very fun group of birders that made this trip what it was.

We kicked things off on the first day in Keflavik, where it didn't take long to get a view of the ocean, feel the wind, and enjoy the birdlife. In Garður, we went to the lighthouse which was a great place to become familiar with Common Eiders, Common Redshanks,

Northern Fulmars, and Northern Gannets. Hiding behind the lighthouse, we trained our scopes on a few Manx Shearwaters slicing by, Common Loons, Parasitic Jaegers, and some shorebirds such as Dunlin, Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Ringed Plover, European Golden-Plover, Eurasian Oystercatcher, and Whimbrel. Not a bad first stop! Nearby we enjoyed an Arctic Tern colony, saw our first White Wagtail and Meadow Pipit, and of course a displaying Common Snipe. After a few more stops, we eventually made it into downtown Reykjavik where we enjoyed the nice hotel and outstanding dinner.

The next morning, we walked to the nearby Tjörninn pond and the cemetery where we enjoyed Redwings, Eurasian Blackbirds, and Common Redpolls. Later that day we boarded a flight and flew to Akureyri; the flight was smooth and the views of the glaciers below were said to be outstanding. Akureyri, a neat little city of 18,000, was kind to us and we enjoyed several new species, best among them being several Fieldfares! Excellent. Next was an impressive set of waterfalls; the world famous Goðafoss. The views were breathtaking!



The Atlantic Puffin, one of the most recognizable seabirds in the world, nests in Iceland by the thousands. This great photo was taken by participant Donna Pomeroy.

The Lake Myvatn area, which was our birding destination and homebase for the next couple of days, was a picturesque and impressive lake hosting thousands of birds. Even birding right across the road from our hotel yielded a long list of species; we added Pink-footed Goose, Graylag Goose, Common Scoter, Tufted Duck, Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, and an array of dabblers. Next, a nearby forest was where we found the endemic subspecies of Eurasian Wren and even a vagrant Bohemian Waxwing! Another nearby lake had a trio of loon species (yes, including a beautiful Arctic Loon!), good numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes, grebes, and of course the ubiquitous Whooper Swans. We visited some coastal areas north of Myvatn as well, which provided us with our first point-blank looks at the clownish Atlantic Puffin. Meanwhile, we also spotted Northern Fulmar, Black Guillemot, and even some distant Great Skuas. Before long, however, we had to make our way west.

En route to the Westfjords, the scenery was top notch! We made many stops along the way where we sorted through shorebirds, including Common Ringed Plover, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Black-tailed Godwit, and Dunlin, as well as stumbling into our first encounter with the huge White-tailed Eagles! By this point, we were all getting used to the pale Glaucous Gulls, the huge Great Black-backed Gulls, and of course the Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The abundant Common Snipe were a constant companion overhead, just about at every stop actually! What awaited us at the end of the road in the Westfjords was the famed Latrabjarg seabird cliffs. We spent the evening there, face-to-face with nesting seabirds such as Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill, Thick-billed Murre, and Common Murre. All the while Parasitic Jaegers worked the cliff edges, and at times would glide right up to us! It was a magical place. The following morning we returned to the cliffs and really had a chance to get to know them. Trust me, many photos were taken! Tens of thousands of seabirds were scattered along the huge cliff faces and frankly, it was hard to grasp the scale of it all. We watched as the Black-legged Kittiwakes flew by, giving their raucous kittiwake calls, we scoped as some European Shags flew by, and spent more time with the murre and Razorbills. Nearby, we encountered a striking little passerine, the one and only Northern Wheatear, as it bounced from rock to rock. Shortly after, the nearby beach provided more chances to learn shorebirds and we even found a vagrant Lesser Yellowlegs!

It was at this point that we added another form of transportation to our trip; a boat! Yep, we took the 2-hour ferry across to Stykkisholmur, stopping at Flatey as well. Although new species were becoming hard to find by this point, we did succeed in finding another striking and northern songbird, Snow Bunting! The next couple of days were spent exploring the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, where we ticked Goldcrest, took a memorable sushi cruise out of Stykkisholmur, stopped by the well-known vista at

Kirkjufellsfoss, sorted through gulls for Iceland Gulls, and enjoyed the point-blank views of Whimbrel and Black-tailed Godwit at Arnarstapi. Situated at the lovely Hotel Búðir for our final day, we enjoyed a fantastic dinner, took a stroll to soak up the last of the Rock Ptarmigans, and snapped some photos of the distinctive black church. Our final couple of birding stops, including one in Borgarnes, netted us a few Common Shelduck (as in nearly 500!), and even another White-tailed Eagle on a nest. And finally, our very last stop was right where we began our adventure, at the Garður lighthouse. This time luck was on our side and we added a key new species, European Storm-Petrel. Whew, just in the nick of time!

Iceland is such a unique and magical place, there really aren't enough adjectives to describe it. We were fortunate and all saw it for ourselves; the tremendous waterfalls at Goðafoss and Dettifoss, the terrific birdlife at Lake Myvatn, the renowned seabird cliffs at Latrabjarg, close nesting European Shags from a boat, and so many other highlights. I sincerely hope you made many good memories as we explored Iceland for these 9 days! It was an honor to bird with all of you and I want to say thank you to everyone for being such an awesome group of birders. From everyone at Field Guides, especially Christine who expertly managed this trip, we wish you the very best and thank you for choosing us for your adventure. Until we meet again, good birding!

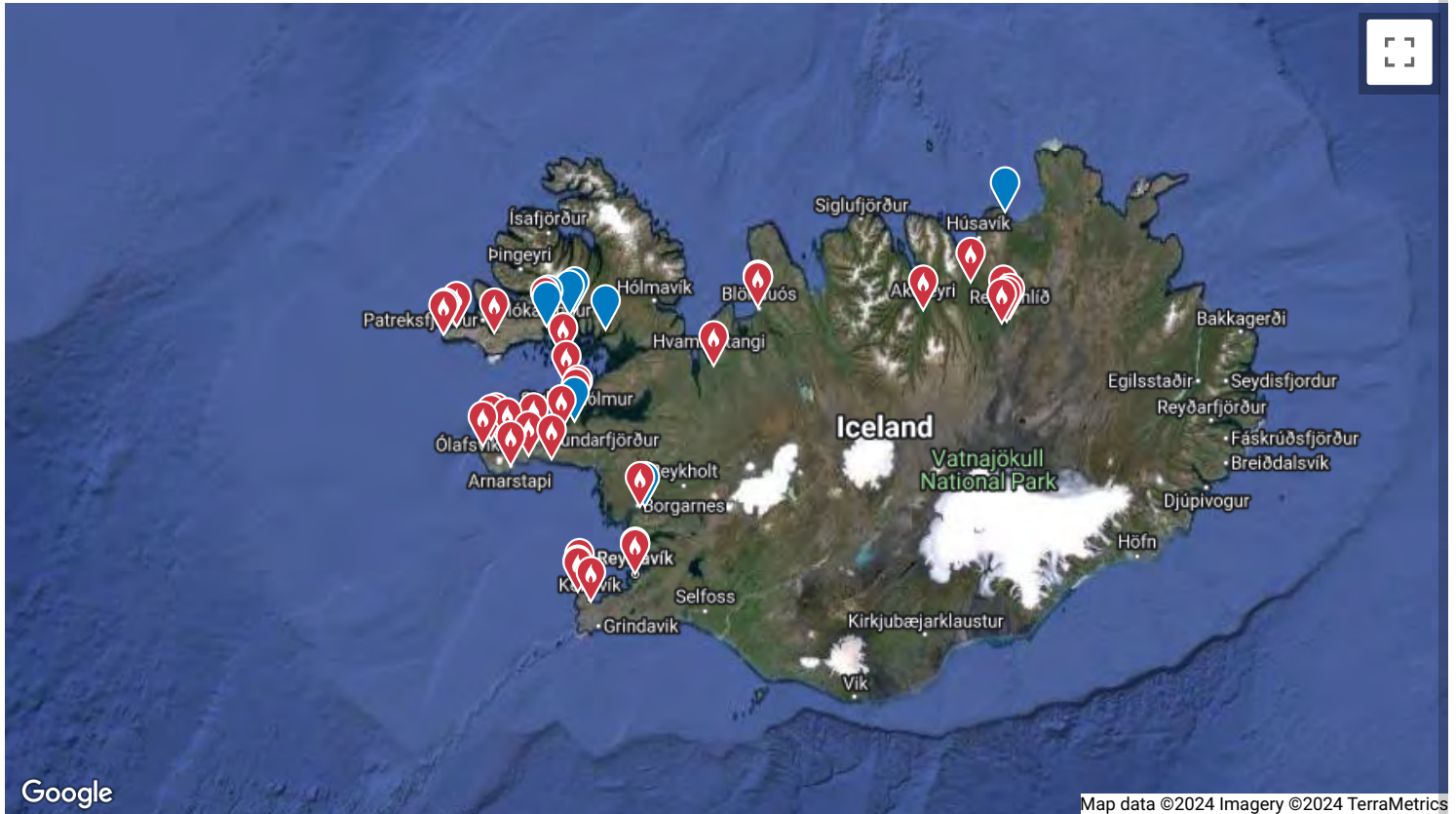
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-- Cory Gregory (Curlew)

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Cory Gregory



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[Species Observed](#)[Checklists](#)[Species with Photos](#)LIFERS  2 

Species Observed

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184	Graylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	 14
15	Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	 2
19	Brant <i>Branta bernicla</i>	 4
1	Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i> *	 1
35	Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	 10
481	Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	 2
5	Gadwall <i>Mareca strepera</i>	 3
19	Eurasian Wigeon <i>Mareca penelope</i>	 5
46	Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	 22
1	Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	 1
13	Green-winged Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	 6
85	Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	  9
11	Greater Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	 4
725	Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	 21
18	Harlequin Duck <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	 4
13	Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	 2
36	Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	 5
11	Barrow's Goldeneye <i>Bucephala islandica</i>	 4
65	Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	 20
16	Rock Ptarmigan <i>Lagopus muta</i>	 8
10	Horned Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	 3

8	Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	▶ 1
93	Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	▶ 22
37	European Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	▶ 11
40	Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	▶ 10
33	Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	▶ 16
28	Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	▶ 12
69	Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	▶ 20
197	Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	▶ 10
67	Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	▶ 21
1	Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i>	▶ 1
18	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	▶ 5
1	Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	▶ 1
17	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	▶ 2
33	Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	▶ 9
6	Purple Sandpiper <i>Calidris maritima</i>	▶ 1
29	Parasitic Jaeger <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	▶ 13
2	Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	▶ 1
1768	Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	▶ 8
58	Black Guillemot <i>Cepphus grylle</i>	▶ 10
506	Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	▶ 5
350	Thick-billed Murre <i>Uria lomvia</i>	▶ 2
5001	Common Murre <i>Uria aalge</i>	▶ 3
3927	Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	▶ 12
71	Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	▶ 20

2	Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	▶ 1
16	Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	▶ 7
155	Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	▶ 20
317	Glaucous Gull <i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	▶ 11
212	Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	▶ 13
3	Iceland Gull <i>Larus glaucoides</i>	▶ 1
1052	Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	▶ 23
21	Red-throated Loon <i>Gavia stellata</i>	▶ 10
1	Arctic Loon <i>Gavia arctica</i>	▶ 1
38	Common Loon <i>Gavia immer</i>	▶ 12
3	European Storm-Petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i> ✓	▶ 1
1706	Northern Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	▶ 15
23	Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	▶ 2
57	Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	▶ 7
50	Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	▶ 8
68	European Shag <i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>	▶ 8
5	White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	▶ 3
1	Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	▶ 1
12	Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	▶ 7
2	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶ 1
1	Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>	▶ 1
4	Eurasian Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	▶ 2
20	European Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	▶ 4

103	Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	▶ 21
7	Eurasian Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	▶ 3
3	Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i> Sensitive ✓	▶ 1
2	Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	▶ 2
1	Bohemian Waxwing <i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	▶ 1
34	White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	▶ 18
49	Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	▶ 23
26	Common Redpoll <i>Acanthis flammea</i>	▶ 7
2	Snow Bunting <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	▶ 1

HYBRIDS

1	Herring x Glaucous Gull (hybrid) <i>Larus argentatus x hyperboreus</i>	▶ 1
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ADDITIONAL TAXA

100	Thick-billed/Common Murre <i>Uria lomvia/aalge</i>	▶ 2
20	Larus sp. <i>Larus sp.</i>	▶ 1