

MAMMALS

- BELUGA** (*Delphinapterus leucas*) – A whale of mostly shallow waters; we saw about eight or nine moving along the shore of a peninsula at Smeerenburgfjord.
- FIN WHALE** (*Balaenoptera physalus*) – As we were leaving Kongsfjord, a group of whales were seen ahead and we managed to get great looks at two of these huge animals, the second largest whale in the world. These two Fin Whales surfaced very close to the ship a couple of times, eliciting oohs and aahs from those on the bow deck.
- BLUE WHALE** (*Balaenoptera musculus*) – The largest animal that ever lived on earth. We saw at least three individuals near the Fin Whales as we were heading out of Kongsfjord. One seemed larger than the other two and though they stayed a bit further away than the Fin Whales, the quite small dorsal fin could easily be seen as they rolled. Wow, what a treat!
- ARCTIC FOX** (*Alopex lagopus*) – After some saw one in Longyearbyen on our first morning and a pair appeared during our walk up the ridge at St. Johnsford, we had our best view of a curious individual that walked up the slope at Alkhornet and circled us while only a few meters away. Back in Longyearbyen, we also had one cross the road ahead of our bus during the rainy morning there.
- POLAR BEAR** (*Ursus maritimus*) – One of the great animals of the world. We ended up seeing five different individuals on consecutive days, both on land and in the pack ice. We got to watch one swimming across a fjord a long ways before making it to shore and heading inland. Another was seen walking and swimming through the pack ice as it stalked a seal which got away. The best encounter was the last one that we found on our return to the pack ice. This individual walked toward the ship sniffing the air as it approached. It got fairly close to the ship but got spooked when a piece of ice cracked and popped up nearby, causing the bear to jog off about 100 yards before stopping to look back at us. This one ended up walking away from us on the seemingly endless ice. Yip! Yip! Yip!
- WALRUS** (*Odobenus rosmarus*) – We did quite well with this rarely encountered, but familiar pinniped. We saw several individuals swimming near the ship or lying on ice floes as we passed, but the best sighting was the visit to a haul-out site in Magdalenefjord, where about 20 individuals were lying, rolling, and softly grunting on the beach. This is a huge animal.
- HARBOR SEAL** (*Phoca vitulina*) – We saw a few on the ice and rocks on our way to the Walrus haul-out site, and then a couple more here and there. These are often IDed by their banana-like silhouette when basking.
- HARP SEAL** (*Phoca groenlandica*) – A quite entertaining seal when seen well, this species has the characteristic of bobbing up out of the water then looking backwards. We ran into a pod of about eight that were doing just this during our first visit to the pack ice, and one of our mornings in the ice produced several groups totaling dozens of individuals. We even got to see the harp-shaped markings on the backs of a few (only the adults sport this pattern that gives the species its name).
- BEARDED SEAL** (*Erignathus barbatus*) – This was the largest of the seals we saw. There were a few loafing on ice floes that showed the long whiskers that gives this species its name.
- SVALBARD REINDEER (CARIBOU)** (*Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus*) – We saw these several times, with a few quite close to us on the tundra or in Longyearbyen. Usually referred to as Svalbard Reindeer, this is a subspecies that is endemic to the archipelago. This form is a bit different to those in Canada and Greenland, in that it has shorter legs. This is an adaption to the fact that snow doesn't get as deep to wade through and the shorter legs help to conserve body heat in the winter. Also, they are not required to run as fast since there are no wolves hunting them here.
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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 29 bird taxa and 10 mammal taxa