

# Iceland in Autumn –Glaciers, Icebergs & Waterfalls

Naturetrek Tour report

8 – 14 September 2013



Naturetrek Group Photo



Sejalandfoss



Northern Lights



Jokulsarlon

Report & Images compiled by Malcolm Stott



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|               |               |                       |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Tour leader:  | Malcolm Stott | Naturetrek Naturalist |
| Participants: | Dave Jones    |                       |
|               | Gwyn Jones    |                       |
|               | Chris Pearce  |                       |
|               | Miriam Pearce |                       |
|               | John Pickett  |                       |
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## Introduction

As autumn draws to a close, it is the time to enjoy the serenity of the mountains. Colours begin to change, in both the landscape and the sky, with spectacular sunsets on a regular basis. As the evenings cool, the northern lights begin to appear dancing across the night skies. There are many charming myths and folk-lore legends surrounding the Northern Lights phenomenon, many claiming them to be Spirits of ancestors or messages from the heavens. The scientific explanation, as is so often the case, is far less mysterious and enchanting but enlightening and interesting nonetheless. The aurora borealis are named after the Latin phrase meaning ‘northern dawn’ and are caused by solar winds interacting with the Earth’s ionosphere.

Most of the winds, consisting of charged solar particles sent Earthwards by solar flares or explosions simply pass the Earth by and disappear into space, but some do enter the atmosphere at its weaker polar-points colliding with atoms and molecules which absorb the particles energy. In order to return to their ‘normal’ state these atoms and molecules emit photons, or light particles, giving us the phenomenon of the Northern Lights.

The aurora is best seen far away from artificial light, beneath the aurora oval which usually circles the Earth between 60° – 70° of latitude which makes Iceland an ideal location to witness this wondrous phenomenon. The intensity of luminescence is inextricably linked to sun-spot activity that has a natural rhythm. To experience these capricious manifestations can sometimes be long and often cold wait with no guarantee the celestial lights will appear on any given night, due to solar inactivity or cloud-cover. Those with a deep aspiration to observe the aurora it is paramount to keep a watchful-eye on the night-sky between 10:00pm – 02:00 am, especially on cloudy-nights when a weather-window may suddenly improve otherwise poor visibility.

## Day 1

**Sunday 8th September**

Heathrow – Keflavik/Gullfoss (182 km)

Weather details: Grey, overcast sky; wind SW2 & temp 9<sup>0</sup>C

The group assembled at Heathrow for an early afternoon flight north to Iceland. The flight proved uneventful and touched down at Keflavik on schedule.

After Malcolm organised the bus, we were soon driving along the barren Reykjanes peninsula before continuing on our journey to Gullfoss. We passed through the small fishing town of Grindavik and followed the new coastal road to the market garden town Hvergerði. The 6,500 year old volcanic crater, Kerð provided a much welcomed opportunity to stop and stretch our legs, fill our lungs with pure arctic air, before arriving at the hotel by 7:00pm. Not wasting anytime we soon found the dining room and enjoyed a delicious meal of Icelandic salmon. Tired from a long day of travel most retired early to recover and prepare for days ahead.

## Day 2

Monday 9th September

Golden Circle (240km)

Weather details; Overcast with periods of light rain: Wind SW 3 & temp 11°C

The inclement weather curtailed our visit to Gullfoss this morning. Although we could hear the thunderous 32m cascade of water, mist and low cloud prevented us from enjoying the breathtaking beauty of this the ‘Queen of Icelandic’s Waterfalls’. The weather situation was similar at Geysir, so we continued onto Skálholt, an ancient bishopric and the last in Iceland. A few individuals waiting on the car park enjoyed some spectacular views of a female Merlin harassing a Lesser Black-backed Gull!

Next we travelled to Selfoss stopping briefly to buy provisions for a picnic lunch before following the course of the River Sog to its source. We stopped frequently to try and find a Barrow’s Goldeneye and although we failed, we did manage some excellent views of a very late pair of Great-northern Divers with a well-grown chick.

We arrived at perhaps the most iconic place in Iceland, Þingvellir National Park and enjoyed an alfresco lunch overlooking Almannagjá (the rift valley), the site where two of the earth’s greatest tectonic plates are visibly pulling apart! Following lunch we travelled through the ‘new land’ onto the American tectonic plate and joined the crowds at the Interpretive Centre before enjoying a leisurely stroll down to the Alþing (Law Rock), the site of Iceland’s parliament founded in 930AD, and a walk back to Þingvellavatn where Malcolm was waiting with the bus.

On our return journey the weather was a little brighter, so we made a second visit to two of Iceland’s most celebrated landscapes, the spectacular Geysir and Gullfoss before returning to the hotel. A pre-dinner daily log was followed by a delicious supper of Icelandic lamb. With a long drive looming the following morning we decided to retire early for the night.

## Day 3

Tuesday 10th September

Drive to Höfn (472km)

Weather details; Wet, windy and low cloud; Wind SE 9m/s; temp 11°C

Making the most of the morning’s good weather we decided on a quick return to Gullfoss for a third visit and we were rewarded with some spectacular views of the waterfall before departing on the journey east to Höfn. The bright shafts of sunshine gilding the waterfall gave rise to a false sense of promise as we left, only to have low cloud and intermittent rain to accompany us on our journey.

We stopped briefly at Hella to buy provisions for lunch and enjoyed some wonderful views of the volcano Hekla before arriving at Seljalandsfoss. The opportunity to experience a walk behind the waterfall proved irresistible for most before continuing onto the impressive waterfall at Skogáfoss. Some more intrepid members of the group couldn't resist the temptation to climb its' heights for a stunning view. Meanwhile Malcolm prepared a picnic lunch taking full advantage of what little shelter was available. After lunch we continued east and passing through Vik we found it lived up to its reputation of being the wettest place in Iceland! Periodically throughout the journey the clouds would lift briefly to give some tantalising views of the spectacular landscape it concealed, but never long enough for us to appreciate its enormity. We passed through the Laki lava field, scene of the greatest lava eruptions in human history in 1783 when it caused the deaths of a third of the Iceland population and even had devastating effects across northern Europe, as far south as northern Spain, by the two-years of famine that followed.

Crossing the Skeiðersandur brought home the immense scale of the glacial eruption in 1996 that swept through this region destroying all vital communications to this remote community. Not until we had arrived in the Örfæfi area could we appreciate the real reason why Iceland got its name. The area is dominated by the vast Vatnajökull glacier which is the largest glacier in the world outside the polar-regions. Here we found some of Iceland's most dramatic landscapes such as the spectacular Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, Skaftafell National Park and Hvannadalshnúkur, the highest peak in Iceland. Following a brief stop at Hali, to arrange a meal for tomorrow evening, we continued onto the Vatnajökull Hotel. After another delicious supper and with diminishing chances of the any northern lights due to cloud-cover we retired with hopes of better weather in the morning.

## Day 4

Thursday 11th September

### Jökulsárlón & Skaftafell National Park (262km)

Weather details; Bright & sunny am, cloudy with light rain pm: Wind SE 9m/s & temp 11°C

The day started surprisingly early with a knock announcing the appearance of the Northern Lights at 1:30am! The celestial lights appeared like a green chiffon veil across a black velvet gown studded with myriads of sparking sequins! The wand of green luminance's edged with magenta danced earthwards in an arc of rippling light and to make the experience even more memorable a chorus of Whooper Swans heralded its arrival! The show last for over an hour before soft sub-fused green light filled the night sky to fade and return darkness. One by one we gradually retired back to the warmth of our bed in euphoric mood after this wonderful experience!

Despite an interrupted night's sleep everyone was up early making the most of the beautiful atmospheric light before we departed for Jökulsárlón after breakfast. The light was so exquisite we were compelled to stop frequently to capture mirror-images reflected in roadside pools. Once at the ice-lagoon we were soon aboard the amphibious-craft cruising amongst some spectacular ice-sculptures, learning all about ice, and quickly filling memory cards with some awesome images! Later we walked to the sea following the ice-blocks to their eternal destiny and photographed those that had stranded on the black lava sands.

After a brief visit to Fjallsárlón, for a closer view of the ice-front, we left the Breidamerkursandur and soon arrived at Skaftafell National Park. First we had lunch on the car park before visiting the Information Centre to watch a video on the catastrophic disaster that hit the area in 1996 when Grimsvötn erupted.

Vatnajökull National Park is Iceland's newest protected area established in 2008. With a total area of roughly 15,000 km<sup>2</sup>, or 13% of it is by far the largest National Park in Iceland as well as in Western Europe. Its key features include the ice-cap of the Vatnajökull Glacier (8,200 km<sup>2</sup>) and several highly active volcanic systems within and outside the ice-cap. The interplay of ice and fire has been the single most important force in shaping the nature of the park. The protection of the Icelandic highlands has been called the largest environmental movement Iceland has ever seen, both in terms of conservation policy and sheer land mass. The environmental success story began in 1997, when the Icelandic Nature Conservation Association was established with the primary objective of conservation and protecting Iceland's wilderness. INCA's goal was to establish a national park in the highlands, encompassing some 40% of Iceland's total land mass of about 100,000 square kilometres

Hvannadalshnúkur (2110m) is the highest summit in Iceland perched on the rim of the caldera of a great volcano Öräfajökull and dominates the region. Öräfajökull is a stratovolcano like the recently erupting and now world famous Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland and Etna in Sicily. Since Iceland was settled in the ninth century it has erupted twice and will probably erupt again. Beneath the Vatnajökull glacier is a 260km long, narrow stretch of land that spans from the west of Skaftafell National Park to the town of Höfn on its eastern border. The lives of people of the region have been shaped and moulded according to the dictates of nature, in a region which, until as recently as 1974, was one of the most isolated parts of Iceland.

We spent the afternoon enjoying Skaftafell National Park, and visiting the beautiful Svartifoss waterfall, one of the main attractions within the Vatnajökull National Park, and well-known for its underlying black basalt hexagonal columns; the inspiration for the design of the new church in Reykjavik. We had enough time to stroll through the scrublands, absorbing its wonderful atmosphere, back to the car park where Malcolm had relocated the bus. On the camp site we found a trio of very confiding Ptarmigan that allowed photographers to approach within 4-5m and didn't seem to mind at all! We were also lucky in finding two of the most sought-after plants on a botanist list in Iceland, Northern Green Orchid and Arctic River Beauty who's only a European distribution is found in Iceland.

Leaving Skaftafell we called at the nearby Svinajökull and filming location of the latest Hollywood blockbuster (Interstellar, due to be released November 2014) for a walk close to the glacier snout. Sadly, all too soon our time in this uniquely beautiful area was fast coming to a close as we retraced our route back to Jökulsárlon where we had a last opportunity to 'walk with icebergs'. In spring this area holds the main breeding ground for the North Atlantic population of Great Skua, so it was fitting that two birds should grace us with their presence before we departed!

This evening we had planned to have supper at Hali, close-by Jökulsárlon just in case the sky was clear to give us the unique opportunity of experiencing the northern lights over the spectacular ice-lagoon. However, when we reappeared outside, following a traditional supper of Arctic Char, low cloud and light rain meant there was, perhaps little point in staying, so we returned to the hotel at Höfn.

## Day 5

Thursday 12th September

Höfn – Reykjanes, 'Northern Lights Inn' (498km)

Weather details; Mixture of sun and light rain: Wind SW9m/s & temp 7°C

By 09:45am we were on the road heading back towards the spectacular ice-lagoon for a final visit. The car park was full by the time we arrived and at least 10 Atlantic Grey Seals were busy entertaining the crowds with their antics. Sadly it was time to leave this uniquely beautiful part of Iceland and start our long journey west.

Driving through this enchanted area, the vastness of the glacier with its various outlets, made a compelling impression in our minds. The expansive views across the black lava sands of the Skeiðarársandur towards Skaftfelljökull glacier left one in awe of the glacier's sheer magnitude, relentless in its crushing effect upon the land beneath it. After a brief waterfall stop to take pictures, our arrival at Vik coincided with a spell of sunshine allowing some a walk to the beach to photo the jagged stacks and watch Atlantic rollers dissipate their energy on the black sands, while Malcolm made a shopping trip and provided an alfresco lunch.

We had time to visit the 'Icelandic Life' Museum at Skogáfoss; an amazing collection of artefacts for one person to have accumulated. The Eyjafellajökull centre was a must stop and provided an intriguing insight to those affected by the eruption.

We eventually arrived in Selfoss where we enjoyed a traditional meal before continuing onto Grindavik and the Northern Lights Inn. The reception was warm, the bedrooms cosy and a night's sleep very welcome...

## Day 6

Friday 13th September

Pelagic & Reykjavik (106km)

Weather details; Sunny am overcast and deteriorating to rain pm: Wind SE7 & temp 9°C

Under blue skies and sunshine we departed for the northern capital of Reykjavik this morning. We arrived at the impressive church, Hallsgrímskirka, which dominates the city skyline followed by a brief tour through the vibrant streets down to the harbour where we were due to take our whale-watching cruise. At the booking office we were informed that due to strong winds it had be necessary to relocate the ship to Hafnarfjörður and we would sail from there. With that in mind Malcolm dropped us off at the spectacular new Opera House, Harpa and left us to enjoy the cosmopolitan ambience of this most northerly capital city before leaving for Hafnarfjörður.

We arrived early and happened to be first on board the ship, which was lucky. What followed was a hilarious experience as we climbed into our thermal suits, leaving little to the imagination! Before too long other passengers arrived and we were soon sailing out into Flaxibay. It was extremely windy making our sailing heavy going. We eventually arrived at an area where Minke Whales had been seen on the previous sailings, but on this occasion we failed to connect with any kind of cetaceans except a few brief glimpses of a Harbour Porpoise on the return journey, just before arriving into Reykjavik harbour.

After a short bus ride back to Halnarfjörður we were reunited with our bus before for the return journey to the Northern Lights Inn. Convivial conversation and good natured banter combined with a delicious traditional fish supper made our last dinner together very enjoyable. With a good aurora forecast and the dense cloud-cover predicted to disperse we patiently waited for the light show to begin. Stars were starting to appear by mid-night and a pale patch of auroral light was just about discernable, but nothing more developed and by 1:30am most had retired to a warm bed for the night! The aurora is a great celestial temptress; she may dazzle you one night and another time will tease you with her presence for only a few minutes – such is the nature of the northern lights!

## Day 7

Saturday 14th September

### Grindavik & return flight UK (100 km)

Weather details; Sunny with intervals of rain: Wind SE4 m/s and temp 8°C

With luggage packed and hotel accounts settled we headed off to explore the Reykjanes peninsula this morning. First we call at Grindavik harbour before visiting the surreal landscape of bubbling mud pots and steaming fumaroles at Gunnhver. Next we continued passed the lighthouse down to Skalafell where we paid homage to the Great Auk, its image immortalised in bronze, poignantly facing out towards Eldey; the island of its extinction on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1844. We watched the wild Atlantic and black lava rocks and some spectacular coastal scenery before visiting the site where the Mid-Atlantic Ridge makes its first visual appearance in Iceland. We walked across the small bridge that 'links' two of the World's greatest tectonic plates before a heavy shower necessitated a dash back on to the bus!

Sadly and all too soon, it was time to return to Keflavik and the International Airport for our flight back to the UK with some wonderful memories of amazing scenery and the magic of northern lights and some of Iceland's natural history along the way! I hope you can now share a little of my enthusiasm for this amazing land and that one day you may return to experience more of what Iceland can offer...

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## Species Lists

Birds (✓= recorded but not counted: H = heard only)

|    | Common name               | Scientific name                  | September |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |                           |                                  | 8         | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 1  | Great-northern Diver      | <i>Gavia immer</i>               |           |    | 2  |    |    |    |    |
| 2  | Red-throated Diver        | <i>Gavia stellata</i>            |           | 3  |    |    |    |    |    |
| 3  | Northern Fulmar           | <i>Fulmaris glacialis</i>        | ✓         | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |
| 4  | Northern Gannet           | <i>Sula bassana</i>              |           |    |    |    |    | 20 | 16 |
| 5  | Great Cormorant           | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>       |           |    |    |    |    | 3  | 12 |
| 6  | Whooper Swan              | <i>Cygnus Cygnus</i>             | ✓         | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |
| 7  | Brent Goose               | <i>Branta bernicla</i>           |           |    |    | 12 |    |    |    |
| 8  | Pink-footed Goose         | <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>      | 14        | 20 | ✓  | ✓  |    |    |    |
| 9  | Harlequin Duck            | <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i> |           |    |    | 4  |    |    |    |
| 10 | Eurasian Wigeon           | <i>Anas Penelope</i>             |           |    |    |    |    |    | 17 |
| 11 | Eurasian Teal             | <i>Ansa crecca crecca</i>        |           |    | 50 | 40 |    | 20 |    |
| 12 | Mallard                   | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>        | ✓         | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |
| 13 | Tufted Duck               | <i>Aythya fuligula</i>           |           | 40 |    |    |    |    |    |
| 14 | Eider                     | <i>Somateria mollissima</i>      |           |    |    | 12 |    | 10 | 24 |
| 15 | Common Guillemot          | <i>Uria aalge</i>                |           |    |    |    |    | 2  |    |
| 16 | Black Guillemot           | <i>Cephus gryllre</i>            |           |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |
| 17 | Rock Ptarmigan            | <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>           |           |    |    | 3  |    |    |    |
| 18 | Merlin                    | <i>Falco columbarius</i>         |           | 1  | 4  | 1  | 1  | 1  |    |
| 19 | Eurasian Golden Plover    | <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>       |           |    |    |    | 12 |    | 60 |
| 20 | Turnstone                 | <i>Arenaria interpres</i>        |           |    |    |    |    |    | 9  |
| 21 | Dunlin                    | <i>Caldris alpine</i>            |           |    |    |    |    |    | 2  |
| 22 | Common Redshank           | <i>Tringa tetanus</i>            | 1         |    | 2  |    | 1  |    | 4  |
| 23 | Common Snipe              | <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>       |           | 2  |    | 1  |    |    |    |
| 24 | Great Skua                | <i>Stercorarius skua</i>         |           |    |    | 2  | 2  |    |    |
| 25 | Black-headed Gull         | <i>Larus ridibundus</i>          |           |    | 40 | 60 | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |
| 26 | Common Gull               | <i>Larus canus</i>               |           | 2  | 30 | 10 | 6  |    | 12 |
| 27 | Black-legged Kittiwake    | <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>          |           |    |    |    |    | 2  |    |
| 28 | Herring Gull              | <i>Larus argentatus</i>          | ✓         | ✓  |    |    | 6  |    |    |
| 29 | Glaucous Gull             | <i>Larus hyperboreus</i>         |           |    |    |    |    |    | 22 |
| 30 | Iceland Gull              | <i>Larus glaucoides</i>          |           |    |    |    |    | 1  |    |
| 31 | Greater Black-backed Gull | <i>Larus marinus</i>             |           |    |    |    |    | 1  | 40 |
| 32 | Lesser Black-backed Gull  | <i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>    |           | 2  | 10 | 2  | 2  | 6  | 5  |
| 33 | Feral Pigeon/Rock Dove    | <i>Columbia livia</i>            | ✓         |    | 6  |    | 1  | 20 |    |
| 34 | Meadow Pipit              | <i>Anthus pratensis</i>          | 6         | ✓  | 1  |    | 2  | 1  | 1  |
| 35 | Redwing                   | <i>Turdus iliacus</i>            | ✓         | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |
| 36 | White Wagtail             | <i>Motacilla alba</i>            |           | 3  | 2  | 10 |    |    | 2  |
| 37 | Northern Wheatear         | <i>Oenanthe oenathe</i>          | 3         | 1  |    |    | 1  | 1  | 4  |
| 38 | Common Raven              | <i>Corvus corax</i>              | 6         | 5  | 30 | 16 | 30 | 15 | 3  |
| 39 | Common Starling           | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>          | ✓         |    |    |    | 10 | ✓  | ✓  |
| 40 | Common Redpoll            | <i>Carduelis flammea</i>         |           |    |    | 24 |    |    |    |

## Mammals

|   |                    |                           |  |  |   |   |    |   |   |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------|--|--|---|---|----|---|---|
| 1 | Common Seal        | <i>Phoca vitulina</i>     |  |  |   | 2 | 1  |   | 1 |
| 2 | Atlantic Grey Seal | <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> |  |  | 5 | 9 | 12 |   |   |
| 3 | Harbour Porpoise   | <i>Phocoena phocoena</i>  |  |  |   |   |    | 1 |   |



## Vascular Plant list compiled by Gwyn &amp; Dave Jones and Malcolm Stott

- \* Only European distribution found in Iceland  
 RN Species with very restricted distribution in Britain, largely montane  
 N Species that occur very largely in northern Britain or in mountains

## Clubmosses, horsetails and ferns

- N Fir Clubmoss *Huperzia selago*

## Conifers

- N Juniper *Juniperus communis* ssp *alpina*

## Buttercups

- Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*  
 Creeping buttercup *R. Repens*

## Birches

- Downy Birch *Betula pubescens*  
 N Dwarf Birch *B. nana*

## Chickweeds, champions etc

- RN Arctic Sandwort *Arenaria norvegica*  
 Common Chickweed *Stellaria media*  
 RN Sea Champion *Silene uniflora*

## Bistorts, docks etc

- N Alpine Bistort *Persicaria vivipara*  
 Sheep Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*  
 N Mountain Sorrel *Oxyria digyna*  
 RN Iceland Purslane *Koenigia islandica*

## Pink family

- Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*  
 Alpine Mouse-ear *Cerastium alpinum*  
 Bladder Champion *Silene vulgaris*

## Thrifts

- Thrift *Armeria maritime*

## Violets

- Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor*

## Willowherb

- Rosebay Willowherb *Epilobium angustifolium*  
 Alpine Willowherb *E. Anagallidifolium*  
 \* Arctic Riverbeauty *E. latifolium*

## Willows and poplars

- N Dwarf Willow *Salix herbacea*  
 RN Woolley Willow *S. lanata*  
 N Tea-leaved Willow *S. phylicifolia*

## Cresses

- Arctic Scurvy Grass *Cochlearia groenlandica*  
 N Northern Rockcress *Cardaminopsis petraea*  
 Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*  
 N Sea Rocket *Cakile arctica*  
 RN Alpine Rockcress *Arabis alpina*

- N Hoary Whitowgrass *Draba incana*  
 Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*  
 \* Hawkweed-leaved Treacle Mustard *Erysimum hieracifolium*

**Heathers**

- N Bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*  
 Heather *Calluna vulgaris*  
 N Bog Bilberry *Vaccinium uliginosum*  
 Bilberry *V. Myrtillus*  
 N Crowberry *Empetrum heraphroditum/nigrum*

**Stonecrops**

- N Roseroot *Sedum rosea*  
 English Stonecrop *S. anglicum*

**Saxifrage**

- N Yellow Mountain Saxifrage *Saxifraga aizoides*  
 RN Purple Saxifrage *S. oppositifolia*  
 RN Marsh Saxifrage *S. Hiculis*  
 RN Tufted Saxifrage *S. Caespitose*  
 N Mossy Saxifrage *S. hypnoides*

**Parnassus**

- Grass of Parnassus *Parnassus palustris*

**Rose family**

- Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*  
 Stone Bramble *Rubus saxatillis*  
 N Alpine Cinquefoil *Potentilla crantzii*  
 Marsh Cinquefoil *P. palustris*  
 Silverweed *P. anserina*  
 Alpine Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla alpine*  
 Lady's-mantle *A. filicaulis*  
 Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala*  
 Water Avens *Geum rivale*  
 Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*

**Pea family**

- Nootka Lupin *Lupinus nootkatensis* - introduced as soil nitrogen agent

**Clovers and vetches**

- Kidney Vetch *Athyllis vulneraria*  
 Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*  
 White clover *T. repens* - introduced leys

**Geranium**

- Wood Cranesbill *Geranium sylvaticum* - widespread  
 Herb Robert *G. Robertianum* - common

**Carrot family**

- Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* - introduced (potential conservation threat?)  
 Pignut *Conopodium majus*  
 Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata* - frequent around farms; introduced  
 Garden Angelica *Angelica archangelica* - abundant

**Gentians**

- RN Alpine Gentian *Gentiana nivalis* - only seen at Skaftafell

|                                   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Bogbean family</b>             |   |   |
|                                   | Bogbean <i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>                  | - widespread in pools   |
| <b>Sea-Lavender family</b>        |   |   |
|                                   | Thrift <i>Armeria maritima</i>                        |   |
| <b>Gentian family</b>             |   |   |
|                                   | Autumn Gentian <i>Gentianella amarella</i>            |   |
| <b>Labiata family</b>             |   |   |
|                                   | Self-heal <i>Prunella vulgaris</i>                    |   |
| <b>Deadnettle and mint family</b> |   |   |
|                                   | Wild Thyme <i>Thymus polytrichus</i> (praecox)        | - widespread & abundant   |
| <b>Mare's-tail</b>                |   |   |
|                                   | Mare's-tail <i>Hippuris vulgaris</i>                  | - widespread  |
| <b>Plantains</b>                  |   |   |
|                                   | Sea Plantain <i>Plantago maritima</i>                 | - widespread  |
| <b>Figwort family</b>             |   |   |
|                                   | Eyebright <i>Euphrasia officinalis</i>                |   |
|                                   | Northern Yellow Rattle <i>Rhinanthus groelandicus</i> | - common, especially in damp flushes                            |
| <b>Butterworts</b>                |   |   |
|                                   | Common Butterwort <i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>          | - widespread in flushes   |
| <b>Bellflower</b>                 |   |   |
|                                   | Hairbell <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>                | - scattered   |
| <b>Bedstraws</b>                  |   |   |
| N                                 | Northern Bedstraw <i>Galium boreale</i>               | - widespread  |
|                                   | Lady's Bedstraw <i>G. verum</i>                       | - widespread  |
|                                   | Slender Bedstraw <i>G. normanii</i>                   |   |
| <b>Valerians</b>                  |   |   |
|                                   | Common Valerian <i>Valeriana officinalis</i>          | - widespread  |
| <b>Bellflowers</b>                |   |   |
|                                   | Harebell <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>                | - widespread  |
| <b>Daisy family</b>               |   |   |
|                                   | Yarrow <i>Achillea millefolium</i>                    |   |
|                                   | Autumn Hawkbit <i>Leontodon autumnalis radicata</i>   | - common (not to be mistaken for Cat's ear <i>Hypochoeris</i> ) |
| N                                 | Dandelion <i>Taraxacum spectabile</i> group           | - several species   |
|                                   | Hawkweed <i>Hieracium</i> spp.                        | - widespread  |
| <b>Rush family</b>                |   |   |
| N                                 | Three-leaved Rush <i>Juncus trifidus</i>              | - widespread on heaths  |
|                                   | Heath Woodrush <i>Luzula multiflora</i>               | - widespread  |
| <b>Sedge family</b>               |   |   |
|                                   | Common Cottongrass <i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>    | - widespread  |
|                                   | Bottle Sedge <i>C. rostrata</i>                       | - common  |
| <b>Grasses</b>                    |   |   |
|                                   | Arctic Fesuce <i>Festuca richardsonii</i>             | - widespread & abundant   |
| <b>Lily family</b>                |   |   |
| N                                 | Scottish Asphodel <i>Toftia pusilla</i>               | - widespread & frequent   |
|                                   | Bog Asphodel <i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>             |   |

**Horsetail family**Marsh Horsetail *Equisetum palustre***Orchid**

|    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| ** | Northern Green Orchid <i>Platanthera hypoborea</i> | - widespread, esp Skaftafell where plentiful. Only found in Iceland outside arctic/subarctic N. America. |
|    | Lesser Twayblade <i>Listera cordata</i>            | - Skaftafell   |
| N  | Corral-root Orchid <i>Corallorhiza trifida</i>     | - frequent, esp Skaftafell   |
|    | Frog Orchid <i>Coeloglossum viride</i>             | - frequent, esp Skaftafell where most plants reddish.  |

**Summary**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Species recorded (not necessarily inclusive) | 98 |
| Only European distribution                   | 2  |
| Rare in Britain with a northern distribution | 9  |
| Northern or montane distribution in Britain  | 22 |

**References**

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Ptarmigan