

Go Slow in Iceland

Naturetrek Tour Report

15th – 22nd May 2026



Long-tailed Duck



Barrow's Goldeneye



Humpback Whale



Red-necked Phalarope

Tour report by Neil McMahon, plant list by Dianne Watkins
Photos by Neil McMahon and Dianne Watkins, painting by Dianne Watkins



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Tour participants: Neil McMahon (leader) with six Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Friday 15th May

With a relatively late flight from Heathrow to Keflavik, we found ourselves arriving in Iceland in wet and windy conditions. After securing our temporary hire vehicle, we jumped aboard and headed for the domestic airport at Reykjavik. Because of a few delays we didn't have time to linger, but picked up on a few species of bird as we headed to Iceland's capital, the most obvious perhaps being Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

We arrived at the airport with only about half an hour to spare, and took a 6.15pm flight to Akeyuri with stunning landscape views all the way. Due to a mix up, there was no hire vehicle operative waiting for us at Akeyuri, but a couple of phone calls resolved the issue and we soon drove away from a very quiet airport!

Another beautifully scenic journey ensued as we drove east, encountering our first Ptarmigans as white blobs on rocks as we passed by. The weather was fine and settled as we drove through the tranquility of the evening sunshine. We finally arrived at the very comfortable Myvatn Sel Hotel at about 8.50pm, where hot food had been pre-booked, and was waiting for us.

Although it had been a day of travel, twenty-nine species of bird had been recorded in just a few hours, with fleeting glimpses of Barrow's Goldeneye, Short-eared Owl and both Red-throated and Great Northern Divers to whet the appetite!

After a late supper, it was time for bed for most, but of course it was still daylight outside for those who wanted to sample some more examples of Iceland wildlife.

Day 2

Saturday 16th May

We took our hotel breakfast at 8.30am, but several of us had been lured outside to see what was on offer around the superb lake opposite. After breakfast we took a little walk from the hotel and up to a small church and churchyard, which offered lovely views of the very special landscape all around. In the churchyard, a pair of Ptarmigans eyed us up suspiciously, but weren't rushing off anywhere, and other birds were a couple of Redpolls, Golden Plovers, Redwings and a brief Snow Bunting: not bad for a small churchyard smaller than many peoples' gardens! The viewpoint from the churchyard permitted views of some shallow pools which had attracted Long-tailed Ducks, Scaup, Arctic Tern and others.

We then took an anticlockwise wander around a small section of Lake Myvatn and opposite the hotel, which provided plenty of displaying Snipes, more Redwings, Meadow Pipits, Great Northern Diver, Red-necked Phalaropes, Wigeon and Slavonian Grebe. All this, in bright sunshine and a keen breeze, made for a very pleasant excursion.

Just outside the hotel is a small café and shop, so we took lunch here overlooking the pseudo-craters, created over two thousand years ago when basaltic lava flowed over the marshy areas of the shore of the lake.

Our afternoon excursion was to visit Godafoss Waterfall, but first we pulled over to soak up a roadside Short-eared Owl which posed beautifully on a roadside fencepost. At Godafoss we parked the minibus by the visitor centre and strolled up the side of the canyon to the main falls. This may not be the biggest waterfall, but it was a very pleasant walk and the force of water squeezing over a relatively small step of rock made it all the more dramatic. Male Ptarmigans were on guard along the way, executing their display flight and emitting their dry, guttural calls. Arctic Skuas patrolled the brooding, dark moors above us, our first Harlequin Ducks were in flight, and Ravens called as they flew past.

There was an opportunity for a coffee and some retail therapy back where the minibus was parked, and then we backtracked to the village of Laugar, where we checked out the fields for views of feeding and displaying waders. Here there were Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits in all their finery, arguing and bickering amongst themselves, beautifully marked Golden Plovers feeding and calling plaintively, Snipe on show and ‘chipping’ and ‘drumming’, and of course Icelandic Redwings hopping about and singing. Plenty of Greylag Geese were interspersed with rather fewer Pink-footed Geese, and Whooper Swans could be seen populating areas of water or feeding in fields.

On our way back to Myvatn we stopped off at the Laxa River, a spot which is a great favourite for travelling naturalists to Iceland. Here we enjoyed close views of Barrow’s Goldeneye and Harlequin Ducks as they battled the currents of the swift-flowing river. Red-throated Diver, Wigeon and Whimbrel were the supporting cast to these very dapper ducks, both on the eastern edge of their mostly North American range.

We were back at our hotel just after 6.00pm in preparation for our 7.00pm evening meal. We completed our checklist, talked about the birds we had seen, and discussed the plans for the following day. There was plenty of time to relax, or walk out to see more birds, prior to retiring for the night in our geothermally-heated hotel.

Day 3

Sunday 17th May

Prior to breakfast, there was an open invitation to pop down and try and get close to some of the displaying waterfowl on nearby reed-fringed pools. The light was stunning again, and the ducks and other birds performed very well at mostly close range, with the bugling and very excited Long-tailed Ducks perhaps stealing the show. Tufted Ducks, Scaups and Barrow’s Goldeneyes were also nice and close. Breakfast was from 8.00am, buffet-style and with plenty of options.

Our itinerary for the day meant quite a bit of driving out into the exposed and barren areas of Iceland to the east and north-east of Myvatn, with very limited facilities for food and drink. So we popped into the café and pretty much bought out all the pre-made sandwiches and similar, ready for our expedition to see some dramatic geological features of the region.

Once we had provisions, we drove out to have a look at Dettifoss, nearly an hour’s drive through a flat wilderness, with snow-capped mountains in the distance. Once parked, we made our way to the falls, which on this occasion was without ice and snow along the way: but we still had to watch our step on the rock and gravel. At peak flow, Dettifoss is the biggest and second-most-powerful waterfall in Europe, and there are generally a number of places from where the views are spectacular. However, this is a changing environment, and due to rock falls and erosion, only two viewpoints were accessible, including the main one overlooking the head of the falls. Most of the water

was free-flowing, but there was plenty of ice present with lots of patterns and squiggles, and the spray created rainbows in the strong sunshine.

As a species we seem to be fascinated by water, and the falls were a magnet for travelling ecotourists, of which there are plenty in Iceland! We were fortunate to see these impressive falls in super weather, and after a while we slowly made our way back to the minibus. The only birds seen were a Great Skua which powered overhead, flying south: other flying birds were Pink-footed Goose, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Red-throated Diver. A few Arctic Skuas were nearby.

Our next planned venue was towards the north coast at a place called Asbyrgi, a new site for both leader and group alike! On arrival we found a café and popped in for a drink. We found a lethargic bumblebee and tried to supply it with some sugar water, but I'm not sure how successful we were at insect first aid. We drove on to a woodland setting in a horseshoe canyon, dominated by Silver Birch, but also with Spruce and other trees. We ate our packed lunch in the car park, and then made ready to explore some tracks through the trees. Fulmars were nesting on the cliffs of the canyon and flying around in small numbers.

Singing Redwings in the trees were joined by Redpolls, and a small lake at the head of the sunken horseshoe canyon attracted Wigeons and Greylag Geese, which were clearly used to daily human visits and barely moved on our arrival. Parts of the lake were iced over, and White Wagtails were photographed walking around on the ice and chasing flies. We heard a singing Wren, and Snipes were 'chipping' and drumming', but didn't really provide sustained views.

After a very pleasant meander around the area, we returned to the minibus and began the drive back to Myvatn, taking in the impressive if rather raw landscape. We stopped off at Namafjall for its hot springs, fumaroles and pungent smell: this is an area where geothermal activity is at or close to the surface. It was possible to get close to the vents in a safe environment, as long as you keep to the paths and viewing areas. Bubbling mud holes, steam and boiling water were but an indication of the heat arising from below.

We were back at our hotel for 5.40pm: we had again been very lucky with the weather, with sunshine all day (cooled by a breeze). And we had stayed dry!

Day 4

Monday 18th May

A pre-breakfast venture for more views of the pools and some photography of ducks was fun: we watched the antics of the drakes trying to impress the females, with the Long-tailed Ducks very much taking the lead!

After breakfast we made ready for a 9.00am departure: our whalewatching boat trip from Husavik had been arranged for today. We arrived in the small town/large village in plenty of time, and were able to take some photos of the church and other architecture. After booking in and paying our parking fee, it was off to the boat where we donned a 'onesy' weather suit and checked the harbour for birds. Eiders, Black Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins were all present.

Before checking for whales, we sailed north to the island of Lundy, the Norse word for Puffin. Here we could see groups of Puffins flying to and fro in preparation for breeding on the island. Other birds here were Common Guillemot, Razorbill, Cormorant and a few passing Gannets, plus our only Grey Seal of the trip.

We then turned back south and towards the southern section of the large bay, and it wasn't long before we saw our first Humpback Whale, the most likely species to be encountered on these trips in the north of Iceland. This species seems to be recovering its numbers in many parts of the world, and although Iceland still indulges in whaling, this species isn't normally the target. During the next hour or so we saw three different Humpbacks: the code of conduct dictated that a boat or vessel will only stay alongside an animal for a certain period of time, to reduce the possibility of disturbance. In all likelihood these animals have probably experienced such vessels for most of their lives, in the same way that large animals in Africa have grown up with safari vehicles in their midst.

One of these magnificent creatures could be seen slapping the water with its distinctive white pelvic fins, and on a couple of occasions rolled onto its back and slapped both fins alternately. Was it a form of communication, was it trying to rid itself of parasites, or was it a sign of emotion? I don't think any of us knew! One of the whales was quite noisy, making grunting noises and wheezy exhalation noises, at one point coming up right alongside the boat for extraordinary views.

Small numbers of Arctic Terns and Fulmars were regularly with us during our boat trip, and on the way into Husavik we were treated to hot chocolate and cinnamon buns. The trip lasted just over three hours, in lovely weather conditions, even though it did get a little cloudy and breezy towards the end.

Once back on land, we took a late lunch at a diner in the town (fries and a sandwich or burger) and then drove north out of Husavik for an exploratory drive along the coast with, of course, more scenic views. At one point, we saw Puffins coming in to a small mainland headland, which was almost certainly a breeding site. Some stops and scanning provided landscape photography opportunities and repeats of birds previously encountered, with breeding Whimbrel, Snipe and others visible on the roadside and in the fields.

We then headed back to our hotel on the shores of Lake Myvatn, again arriving just after 6.00pm for our 7.00pm evening meal. A full day in the fresh air makes people tired, and after completing our assessment of what we had seen, it was time for some comfort and sleep in preparation for the following day's itinerary.

Day 5

Tuesday 19th May

Our pre-breakfast meander and check of the pools behind the church was again dominated by bugling and excited Long-tailed Ducks, with the usual supporting cast of Red-necked Phalaropes, Arctic Terns, waders and other ducks.

After breakfast, we left the hotel at about 9.15am and visited some nearby woodland at Hofdi. A very pleasant two-hour dawdle (sometimes it's nice to move slowly and see what appears in front of you) provided great views of Wren, Redpoll, Redwing, Snipe and a variety of ducks. We witnessed a huge hatch of non-biting midges: the still, mild conditions were perfect for them to do their thing. The air was so thick with them at certain points that it was difficult to see the terrain beyond them! And of course, it's events like this that provide the magnet for the rich birdlife around Lake Myvatn: ducklings and Red-necked Phalaropes are particularly reliant on them. Angelica

was pushing aside the lean top soil, and other plants included Wood Anemone and Marsh Marigold. The credit card operated facilities in the car park provided some 'toilet humour' and intrigue!

We moved on to the very impressive lava fields and folds at Dimmuborgir, where we were also on high alert for trolls: they are luckily not normally encountered during the day, but there really isn't a 'night' at this time of the year, and the trolls could feasibly be seen at any time. We took the shorter purple route: it was quiet for birds despite there being plenty of Dwarf Birch using the lava as a windbreak to grow a little taller than usual.

After our potter, the weather conditions were so good that we sat down outside the visitor centre and enjoyed our lunch on the benches there. Some Pink-footed Geese flew over, and a Merlin flew around for a short while, the only one encountered all trip.

After lunch, one of our number returned to the hotel, while the remainder of us drove west to Lake Vestmannsvatn. Here we saw up to six magnificent summer-plumaged Great Northern Divers, but the main reason for coming to this location was to see a summering Black-throated Diver, which was paired up with a Great Northern Diver. Black-throated Diver is a rare visitor to Iceland, but this returning bird has been at this site for a couple of years. After some scanning, we picked up the bird at long range, and tried a couple of points around the lake to obtain better views. The bird was vocalizing and holding territory with its Great Northern mate. Arctic Skuas were also present, as well as Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Whooper Swans and Raven.

On our way back, we dropped back into the River Yaxa area, where the resplendent Harlequin Ducks provided super, close views. Here we also added Goosander to the trip list, with a fine drake on the edge of the river, plus Arctic Skua, Red-throated Diver and Barrow's Goldeneye. The afternoon was quite cool, with a grey, cloudy backdrop, before becoming beautifully sunny in the evening.

We were back at the hotel just after 5.00pm, with time to relax ahead of our dinner at 7.00pm with an opportunity to again work through the menu options. We reflected on the day's events and laid out our plans for the next day.

Day 5

Wednesday 20th May

A rather foggy and still start to the day saw two of us trying to photograph birds in the murk before breakfast. Long-tailed Ducks and pairs of Scaup and Red-breasted Merganser came close, and the Red-necked Phalarope behaviour changed, with more avid feeding rather than chasing each other around as usual. The sun broke though by the time we sat down for breakfast, but it remained a cooler and greyer day than we had been used to. A little light rain/drizzle came and went during the day.

We had a 9.00am muster at the minibs and mobile hide, and we completed a very slow clockwise drive around the entire shore of Lake Myvatn, stopping and decamping to scan where safe to do so. Great Northern and Red-throated Divers again delighted us, as did gorgeous summer-plumaged Slavonian Grebes, Scaups and Common Scoters.

We again lunched at Dimmuborgis, this time indoors, as it was distinctly cooler than the day before! Afterwards,

one of our number returned to the hotel, and the rest of us went to Hofdir Woods, where the midges were still very much present, and attracted up to one hundred and twenty Red-necked Phalaropes feasting on them. A male Ptarmigan in the wood posed majestically, and we noted a pair of Slavonian Grebes with four eggs in a nest.

Gadwall, a Pintail and confiding Redwings were all much enjoyed, and a calling adult Little Gull flew east with a flock of Black-headed Gulls. Arctic Terns were also flying up and down over the surface of the water, picking off the midges, and all the small birds in the wood were on the leeward side, also feeding off the insect hatch, with as many as three or four Wrens present. Barrow's Goldeneye and Snipe also showed very well. Some sizeable flocks of Pink-footed Geese were about and provided roadside viewing, mostly alongside the larger Greylags for easy comparison.

We returned to our hotel at about 3.45pm, and walked out again for some lake birding at 6.00pm: Slavonian Grebes and Red-necked Phalaropes provided exceptional views. A fly-over calling Curlew was unexpected.

Day 7

Thursday 21st May

The early morning jaunt (in dull conditions) didn't provide anything new, and after our breakfast we drove to the River Yaxa, where this time we walked up-river. The expected Barrow's Goldeneyes and Harlequin Ducks were present, and it proved impossible to walk past a close Ptarmigan without taking a photo! More Pink-footed Geese and close Red-necked Phalaropes added to the 'with nature' feel of the morning. A dark-morph Arctic Skua flew directly over our heads, and a Redwing proclaimed the car park as his, belting out his song from a post.

Afterwards, we checked the western shore of Lake Myvatn, with views of Red-throated and Great Northern Divers, some twenty-five Common Scoters, and a pair of Arctic Skuas scavenging a road-kill female Ptarmigan. Another Arctic Skua harassed an Arctic Tern so much that it disgorged its stomach contents of midges three times before it was left alone.

We took our lunch at the café next to our hotel, and at 2.00pm we reconvened to drive the track leading to Lake Graenavatn. Meadow Pipits provided point-blank trackside views, and a Snipe chirped from a breeze block post.

Some old turf-roofed houses and barns were photogenic, and waders on the lake included Dunlins and yet more Red-necked Phalaropes. A female Wheatear, a Raven and a chat with one of the local shepherds was all very pleasant.

We made a quick visit to the cave complex and hot water springs at Grjotagja, with lots of lambs and Ptarmigan on the track that leads there. A Raven voiced its concerns from a prominent lava outcrop. We drove to a viewing area overlooking the whole of Lake Myvatn, plus the local geothermal plant and its vivid blue lake, complete with a constant outpouring of steam.

We finished our afternoon tour by parking in an area next to a hostel on the east shore of Lake Myvatn, where a sheltered bay and a couple of spits reaching out in the shallow water offered a refuge and breeding area for a range of classic birds of the area. Slavonian Grebes displayed and argued with each other, Black-tailed Godwits shrieked, and Golden Plovers called softly. Tufted Ducks, Scaups and Shovelers were with the usual suspects as we scanned

this little bit of paradise, with an excellent cross-section of birds and Marsh Marigolds providing yet more vibrant colour.

We were back at our hotel by 5.00pm, and with a few administrative and other chores completed, it wasn't long before we enjoyed our final dinner at the Sel-Hotel Myvatn, which had proved to be the perfect venue for our tour.

Day 8

Friday 22nd May

Our last day was mostly about travel, but there was still time for an early morning venture prior to breakfast! We checked out at 9.00am and drove gently to Akureyri for our domestic flight to Reykjavik, which left on time. We had a little time to check the birds on the mud spits at Akureyri, which included Glaucous Gull, Turnstone, Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, Knot and Sanderling. A couple of Harbour Seals were visible as we drove along the causeway, and Eider and Kittiwake were back on the agenda.

In Reykjavik, we dropped one of our number off at a hotel for further Iceland adventures, and pushed northwards in yet another minibus. We had time to drive to the Blue Lagoon and the area that had experienced volcanic eruptions and lava flows in 2024 and 2025. It was possible to see the new lava, and how it compared with that from much earlier eruptions. It was also impressive to see the engineering skills at work to build a bund to protect against future events.

Our last stop was to visit the lagoons at Njardvik, which provided views of a variety of gulls (including a 'Nelson's Gull' – a hybrid Glaucous x Herring Gull), a number of migrant Pale-bellied Brent Geese, and a Sanderling.

We dropped another of our number at a nearby hotel for a flight the following day, and the remainder of us returned to Keflavik Airport for our afternoon flight back to Heathrow, where our tour came to an end. We had some great memories and photos to cherish.



Harlequin Duck

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Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	May 2026							
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>								✓
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>					✓		✓	
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	✓			✓				✓
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>					✓			
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus muta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Feral Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>								✓
Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓							✓
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>								✓
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>						✓		
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	✓			✓				✓
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>								✓
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>								✓
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				H	H	✓	✓	✓
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>								✓
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>						✓		
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>				✓				✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓			✓	✓			✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
"Nelson's Gull" (Glaucous x Herring)									✓
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>				✓				✓

Common name	Scientific name	May 2026							
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>				✓				✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>			✓					
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>				✓				
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>				✓				
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>				✓				
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>				✓				
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black-Throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>					✓			
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>			✓	✓				✓
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>				✓				
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				✓				
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	✓	✓						
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>					✓			
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			H		✓	✓		
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓			✓				✓
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>				✓				
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		✓	✓				✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>		✓	✓		✓			✓

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	May 2026							
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Atlantic Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>				✓				
Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>								✓
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>				✓				

Insects

Common name	Scientific name
a bumblebee	<i>Bombus</i> sp.
midges	Chironomidae sp.
Black Fly	Simuliidae sp.

Fungi

Scientific name	Common name	Comments
<i>Trametes ochracea</i>	White-rot Fungus	Several colonies seen on rotting stumps of fallen Birch trees in woods.

Lichens

Scientific name	Common name	Comments
<i>Alectoria ochroleuca</i>	Green Witch's Hair	So abundant it covers lava mounds and hills.
<i>Cetraria sepincola</i>	Chestnut Wrinkle-lichen	Small dark brown lichen growing on living Birch tree trunks and thicker btanches. Very dry and shrivelled.
<i>Cladonia chlorophaea?</i>	Pixie Cup sp.	Cup shaped thallus showing well. With a moss.
<i>Cladonia</i> sp.	a reindeer moss	NOT the endemic <i>Cladonia islandica</i>
<i>Cladonia rangiferina</i>	a reindeer moss	Growing in damp areas in riverbank. Very abundant with colour variations.
<i>Parmelia saxatilis</i>	Salted Shield Lichen	Growing on rocks in open woodland.
<i>Peltigera</i> sp. prob. <i>P. canina</i> but could be <i>P. kristinssonii</i> or <i>P. aphthosa</i>	Dog Lichen	Dried out, growing amongst leaf litter in Birch forest.

Mosses

Scientific name	Common name	Comments
<i>Bartramia ithyphylla</i>	Apple Moss	Fairly common. Capsules looking like Granny Smith apples. Last year's capsules also present - brown ith stripes.
<i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i>	Woolly Fringe Moss	One of the first settlers in new lavas, creating thick, insulating mats that help protect the underlying soil from wind erosion and retain moisture. Widespread.
<i>Sphagnum</i> sp.	a sphagnum moss	

Vascular plants

Scientific name	Common name	Comments
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Field Horsetail	Just emerging
<i>Equisetum variegatum</i>	Variegated Horsetail	Just emerging
<i>Woodsia ilvensis</i>	Oblong Woodsia (Rusty Cliff Fern)	Growing on rocks in woodland in shade - very small specimens
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Common Juniper	Icelandic conditions, too harsh for it to develop into a tree - it was seen spreading low over the ground in open woodland - the only native conifer
<i>Larix sibirica</i>	Siberian larch	Widely cultivated, also growing wild with Birch
<i>Picea obovata</i>	Siberian Spruce	One seen - introduced
<i>Picea</i> sp.	a spruce	Introduced - widely planted; obviously cultivated stands seen as well as more random specimens in Birch woodland
<i>Pinus contorta</i>	Lodgepole Pine	One seen - introduced
<i>Beta vulgaris</i>	Swiss Chard	Cultivated in woodland - introduced
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Thrift	Cliffs at Horseshoe Canyon and in "desert" areas - last year's dead flowers.
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Field Sorrel	Basal leaves
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Sheep's Sorrel	Basal leaves only - most common Sorrel
<i>Saxifraga oppositifolia</i>	Purple (Mountain) Saxifrage	In flower in Dettifoss area - just clear of snow
<i>Sedum acre</i>	Goldmoss (Biting) Stonecrop	Red tips just emerging in gravel
<i>Myriophyllum sibiricum</i>	Northern Watermilfoil	Growing in Lake Myvatn adjacent to shore - locally abundant but rare in Iceland
<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	Bloody Crane's-bill	In woodland - introduced

Scientific name	Common name	Comments
<i>Lupinus nootkatensis</i>	Nootka Lupin	Few in flower at coast and massive planted bank at roadside. Not native to Iceland - was introduced in the 1940s to help with soil erosion. Since then, it has spread like a weed all around Iceland and has proven difficult to control. It outcompetes native vegetation. which allows <i>Angelica</i> also to become dominant on the enriched soil
<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>	Wood-sorrel	In woodland - native but probably introduced where it was found.
<i>Alchemilla alpina</i>	Alpine Lady's-mantle	Leaves only - mainly in woodland
<i>Alchemilla glomerulans?</i>	a lady's-mantle	Leaves only in woodland - probably introduced
<i>Dryas octopetala</i>	Mountain Avens	National flower of Iceland: very hardy, leaves only seen.
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild (Wood) Strawberry	Leaves and runners plus a couple of developing fruit growing in and near a cultivated patch in woodland - introduced here and usually only found in south
<i>Betula nana</i>	Dwarf Birch	Growing in moorland
<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Downy Birch	Most common native tree in woodland - once widespread, but forests lost due to charcoal production by Vikings; can hybridise with Mountain Ash to create 'Forest Birch'
<i>Salix lanata</i>	Woolly Willow	Very common shrub in open areas - in flower
<i>Salix phylicifolia</i>	Tea-leaf Willow	Shrub seen growing along riverbanks and generally in wetter areas - in flower
<i>Draba verna</i>	Common Whitlowgrass	In flower - some leaves reddish; northern sp.
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh Marigold	Few on banks at edges of lakes - in flower
<i>Anemonoides nemorosa</i>	Wood Anemone	Woodland - introduced
<i>Thymus praecox</i> subsp. <i>arcticus</i>	Arctic Thyme	One seen - leaves only
<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	Common Butterwort	Carnivorous - sticky leaves catch flies which they digest - leaves only seen growing in damp area.
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	Common - last year's dried seed heads and emerging leaves; in farmland esp. near hotel - possibly introduced.
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Common Dandelion	In urban areas - in flower.
<i>Angelica archangelica</i>	Angelica	Cultivated form has rounded umbel but emerging leaves and dead seedheads seen all over in fields, along riversides and in woodland
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Wild Angelica	Wild form with flat heads (umbel) - many fewer seen mostly along river banks; emerging leaves and dead seedheads
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Bearberry	Very common in moorland - one with two red berries.
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Common Heath	Fairly common – purple leaves and last year's dried flower heads in moorland and open woodland.
<i>Empetrum nigrum</i>	Crowberry	Very common in moorland and woodland - leaves had a reddish hue depending on location - very hardy.
<i>Orthilia secunda</i>	Serrated Wintergreen	Basal leaves and last year's dried seedheads; RARE - limited distribution
<i>Pyrola minor</i>	Common Wintergreen	Basal leaves and last year's dried seedheads
<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	Bilberry	
<i>Androsace septentrionalis</i>	an alpine primrose (prob. Pygmy-flower Rock-jasmine)	In flower in woodland - introduced