

# Iceland

## *Flowers, Ice & Fire*

### A Greentours Tour Report

25<sup>th</sup> June – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Led by Ian Bennallick & Trausti Gunnarsson

#### Day 1      Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June Heathrow to Snæfellsness

After a trouble-free flight, skirting the south of Iceland taking in the small island of Surtsey below, we landed at Keflavík in brilliant sunshine but cool winds. Diane, Barrie, Kay and David had already arrived from their far-flung parts of the world and had already been exploring the local area around Reykjavík with Trausti, our local leader for the trip. As we started the three hour journey to the peninsula of Snæfellsness, and our destination Grundarfjörður, on the west coast, we passed acres of the North American Nootka Lupin *Lupinus nootkinensis* which had been introduced to stabilise the eroding soils; however it had become well established in many lowland areas, colouring them blue. Near the airport the pink heads of Thrift *Armeria maritima* made pink drifts with the red Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*. We didn't get far before a quick look at the vegetated lava where a dwarf shrub community had developed – one which we would see frequently later on in the trip. Purple patches of Wild Thyme *Thymus praecox* subsp. *arcticus*, yellow Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, white Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala* and mats of Bog Bilberry *Vaccinium uliginosum*, Dwarf Birch *Betula nana*, Dwarf Willow *Salix herbacea* and Crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* clung to the rock, with Heath-spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* dotted around, and Wood Crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum* in crevices with Stone Bramble *Rubus saxatilis*. Along the road verge were patches of the yellow Kidney-vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, rare in Iceland. We drove through a very modern and bright Reykjavík, with the usual mix of huge warehouse sheds, shopping malls and scattered suburban development in areas that Trausti once knew of only wild land when a lad. However Iceland still has a lot of wild land!

As we drove north we started to see the more changeable side of Iceland weather and some hefty showers passed by, making the dramatic vistas of the high mountains, some still with snow, more atmospheric. As we drove along we saw several birds such as Oystercatcher, Redshank and Golden Plover, in wet fields and rough ground near the van. We looked for White-tailed Eagle as we approached the west coast at Grundarfjörður but couldn't see any. We arrived at the hotel right on the seafront at the town and after a quick brush-up had dinner. The bright midnight light (it was summer near the Arctic Circle after all) changed as the clouds went by but thankfully blackout blinds gave us some darkness for sleep.

#### Day 2      Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June      Snæfellsness Peninsula

The whole of the Snæfellsness Peninsula was to be explored and several stops were on the menu. The high dormant volcano at the tip of the Snæfellsness Peninsula, with its retreating but

small glacier, Snæfellsjökull, loomed around each corner. This old volcano gave inspiration to H.G. Wells as the entrance to the centre of the earth in his novel *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. The weather was gloriously sunny, but with a cool wind straight from the Arctic Circle. Lesser Back-backed and Glaucous Gulls, Fulmar, Oystercatcher and Arctic Skua were seen around the bays, with Redshank and Golden Plover on the marshy grassland. A quick stop on the coast along a beach at Mávahilðarrif to look for Harlequin Duck (which we didn't see – yet), had us marvelling at the many rafts of Eider duck out on the sea. The beach here had Lyme Grass *Leymus arenarius*, which had been planted elsewhere in inland Iceland for binding the volcanic sandy soils, and Sea Pea *Lathyrus japonicus* subsp. *maritimus*. Another short stop at Ólafsvík for a photo of the modern church, and we were soon on our way to Rif, and a chance to do some birding beside a shallow lagoon. As we arrived the Arctic Terns sat on the grey gravel car park flew up but as we walked to the bird hide promptly dive-bombed us! However as we crossed the road, they moved off. In the water and very close to us, several Red-necked Phalarope jittered in the water, living life at double speed – or so it seemed. In the sunshine, the red on the neck was very obvious, and it was striking how small these birds were. On the shallow mud of the lagoon Trausti spotted one Iceland Gull amongst a mass of Glaucous Gull, as well as Tufted Duck and Scaup. On the shallow soils on the roadside some hands and knees botanising proved successful and we soon found Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*, Northern Green Orchid *Platanthera hyperborea*, Slender Bedstraw *Galium normanii*, Annual Stonecrop *Sedum annuum* and Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*.

We drove onto an old lava field and towards Öndverðarnes, a small headland where Trausti had hoped for a sighting of a cetacean. The sea was very rough and despite looking we didn't see any. However the views towards Snæfellsjökull were wonderful and Beryl found a large patch of Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima*, with grey leaves and bright blue flowers. Another short stop to photograph the drifts of Alpine Mouse-ear *Cerastium alpinum*, Mountain Avens and Moss Campion *Silene acaulis*, and we were on our way back to the main road. Trausti screeched to a halt and shouted “Arctic Fox” and eventually everyone could see it – a brown fluffy animal with a flattish muzzle and light golden ears and tail, more a teddy bear than a fox. It was given away by the constant mobbing of Wheatears, worried for their nests or young. We had fine views of it as it scuttled away.

We drove to Saxhóll, a tephra cone (formed from volcanic ash spewed out from an eruption) and out of the wind had our picnic amongst Heath-spotted Orchids, Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris* and Bog Bilberry. After lunch the short walk up and into the vegetated cone added Northern Rock-cress *Cardaminopsis petraea*, Sea Campion *Silene uniflora*, Roseroot *Rhodiola rosea*, Alpine Snow Saxifrage *Saxifraga nivalis*, Mossy Saxifrage *Saxifraga hypnoides* and Tufted Saxifrage *Saxifraga caespitosa*, Mountain Sorrel *Oxyria digyna* and Frog Orchid *Coeloglossum viride* to our list.

Driving through lava fields towards the beach at Djúpalónssandur, much of it was covered in the cushions of the grey moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, as if someone had sprayed moss foam on the rocks, and at one spot a small plant of Oblong Woodsia *Woodsia ilvensis* (very rare in the British Isles) fern was perched on the top. We walked down to the andesite pebbled beach and found Scot's Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum* on rocks, and on a stack focussed the scope on some nesting Great Black-backed Gulls, with chicks perilously close to the edge.

Further along the coast we stopped at the sea cliffs at Þufubjarg, where the smell of the seabird colony was evident before we could see any. The seas had become much calmer and despite looking we could still see no whale or dolphin. As we gingerly walked to the edge the noise was incessant – from thousands of birds nesting on sheer cliffs with Kittiwakes, Guillemots,

Brunnich's Gullmots, Razorbills and Fulmar, all sharing small ledges. On the way back to the van we looked for *Botrychium lanceolatum* in short turf, seen here in 2003, but without success. Despite the evening drawing on we had two more stops. The first at Arnarstapi had the group walking a short distance along cliffs where the basalt had formed wonderful columns; some had formed stacks, arches and some contorted by various forces. On one arch and a blowhole sides we could look down onto Kittiwake nests, extremely close, where we could see the chicks under the parent birds; one had as many as three, and we watched as the other parent bird returned from the sea and swapped nest duty. Along the cliff turf we found Alpine Fleabane *Erigeron borealis*, and more unusually, Sea Pea, high up on cliffs. As we returned to the van we watched a local fishing boat haul off its catch of Cod (huge fish) onto the harbour.

One last stop at the pretty coastal dune area of Buðir had us walking to small sunken hollows in sand-covered lava, many with purple Wood Crane's-bill, and everywhere covered in Shade Horsetail *Equisetum pratense*. At last we found one with Herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, rare in Iceland, as well as Icelandic Hawkweed *Pilosella islandica*, Rock Speedwell *Veronica fruticans*, with brilliant Gently-blue flowers, and Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis*. Snipe drummed overhead, Meadow Pipits 'parachuted' and David saw a plover – which on closer inspection turned out to be a Ptarmigan, perfectly camouflaged in the turf. We returned to the van, past the small black wooden church, and drove back to Grundarfjörður for a late supper – but stopping again at the bridge at Mávahlíðarrif where some male Harlequin Ducks were dabbling in the fresh water of the river entering the sea at low tide.

### Day 3      Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June      Flatey; Hraunsvík; Berserkjhraun

The morning dawned bright and calm, with a beautiful morning setting of the mountains set behind the bay. We started off early at 8am to drive to Stykkisholmúr to catch the ferry across the inlet of Breiðafjörður to the small island of Flatey, but drove along the coast road for a chance of seeing White-tailed Eagle. Despite looking we could see none but saw Whooper Swan in the bay and Ringed and Golden Plover alongside the road. We arrived at Stykkisholmúr in good time for buying tickets, and were soon on the top part of the ferry – an ideal vantage point for spotting birds and cetaceans as we travelled. The ferry left promptly and as we sailed out from Stykkisholmúr, the small town of brightly coloured houses, small factories and boats in the harbour was looking picturesque with the backdrop of snow-capped mountains. Fulmars were our companions, with Gannet also seen briefly. No cetaceans were seen, but as we neared the flat island of Flatey we could see Puffins bobbing up and down in the water. We landed at the small quay and Trausti immediately took us up the path where Redshank noisily defended territories from the highest pole, fence-post or hummock. Snipe drummed overhead and as we neared the other side of the island, Red-necked Phalarope and a Teal with young dabbled in a sedge pond. A Snow Bunting perched on a pile of wood and along the rocks by the sea Oystercatchers were noisy, and Black Guillemots basked on the rocks or swam around the small bay with flat, red Hagfish dangling from their bills (behavioural perhaps?), which they seemed in no hurry to devour. Birds were everywhere, and with young, despite the odd Lesser Black-backed Gull sweeping overhead. Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris* coloured grassy places bright yellow, and the small village buildings added more colour with bright blues, ox-blood red and yellow walls and roofs. Towards the east part of the island a bird reserve is out of bounds but we did walk a little way to the fence to see what was around. Several Eider females and males were in rafts or on rocks, and many Puffins were still on the shallow cliffs and rocks and through the scope they looked – cute! Arctic Terns wheeled overhead, sometimes dive-bombing us if we strayed too close to their territories, but we arrived at the small church safely. We had a quick look in where the walls and ceilings had been painted with scenes of old Island life

(sealskin curing, fishing, etc.) and some of the religious events. Towards the other coast we had a look for Grey (or Red Phalarope) which Trausti had hoped to see - a few breed here. However we only saw a Common Seal, hauled out on the beach and also a very close Black Guillemot, which alternated from standing on a rock, very close to us, or diving in amongst the tussocks between large rocks.

Driving back to Grundarfjörður Trausti had a few more stops for us. At Hraunsvík we looked vainly towards the bay for a White-tailed Eagle, though we didn't see any a few Greylag Geese were in the bay and the ubiquitous Snipe called nearby. Ringed Plover and Whimbrel were seen. A few good plants were seen here including Common Butterwort, Scottish Asphodel *Toeplitzia pusilla* and Hairy Stonecrop *Sedum villosum*. Further along on the roadside through the recent lava-field of Berserkjahraun, we stopped to admire the many plants of the wonderfully lemony-yellow Arctic Poppy *Papaver radicum* alongside mats of purple Thyme. Whilst photographing the poppies, Ian noticed that several of the seed-heads had been previously *snipped off* – perhaps by interested plant collectors before, a very selfish thing to do as it reduces a population's ability to colonise in the future. Luckily a few seed-heads remained. The scenery here is stupendous with extensive lichen covered lava-fields and tephra cones. The short drive back to the hotel in bright sunshine gave us more opportunities to look for eagles.

## Day 4      Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June      transfer to Akureyri

The last day at Grundarfjörður had us facing cold north winds whipping up the sea into white horses. The gulls and Fulmars wheeled around as we drove off, and close to the town, Dick and Trausti spotted two dots in the sky – comparatively large and gliding, definitely White-tailed Eagle – at last! The pair of eagles soared higher and by the time the van had stopped we lost sight of them. At Alftafjörður there were many Whooper Swans on the calm waters, and Trausti told us that the population of these birds were at saturation in Iceland. We drove on through the wonderful landscape across the wild and empty terrain, stopping briefly for provisions at Búðardalur, and a very quick stop at the summit on the road to Hrótafjörður near Laxárvatn for the flowering cushions of Moss Campion and other small arctic-alpine plants, though it was so cold and windy only the hardy stayed out for long. Further on we stopped in a small picnic spot, where a few birches had been planted near Vatnsdalshólar and in spitting rain picnicked with Redpolls in the branches above. The extra provisions Ian bought brightened up the picnic no end! With a long drive still we had a quick look at the small lake of Vatnsdalshólar, and to our delight saw a pair of Great Northern Divers with a chick and in the scope could see the wonderful plumage and in the wind listened to their eerie calls.

It rained on and off for our journey to Blönduós, but the sun came out as we watched several Greylag geese with goslings waddle across the mown lawns of the police station. We explored a river island near the town where there were many flowering Northern Green Orchid, a number of Small White Orchid growing among the heath dotted with deep purple Alpine Bartsia *Bartsia alpina*. The island protects an area of regenerating woodland and among the damper areas were plentiful Wood Crane's-bill, Water Avens *Geum rivale* and Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*. Alongside the river were drifts of Nootka Lupin. Redwing, Meadow Pipit and more Redpoll were seen among the trees. The sharp showers drenched a few of us but we soon dried out as we drove towards Akureyri.

Topping a rise there was a view of rows of flat-topped slate grey, snow mottled mountains before we descended into a broad green valley, where the farmers had been busy silaging in their fields. In the braided channel of the Heraðvotn River were families of Pink-footed Geese

with well grown but still somewhat fluffy goslings alongside, though as they saw us they ran the other way! There was also the large pink-flowered Arctic Riverbeauty *Epilobium latifolium* in flower, a bit like a dwarf Rosebay Willowherb. We passed through more fine scenery - it would have been if it wasn't for the thick fog which had descended! - before arriving at the shore of magnificent Eyjafjörður, Iceland's longest fjord (78km) and home to Akureyri its second city with twenty thousand people. Our hotel was nestled into the fertile, peaceful farmland beyond the town, above the braided channels and marshes of the Eyja River. In the distance the mountains had a dusting of fresh snow. After settling in the comfortable and warm rooms we gathered for a tasty dinner and checklists after.

## Day 5      Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June      Eyjafjörður & Ólafsfjörður

The tour of beautiful Eyjafjörður began in rainy cool weather not far out of Akureyri where in rough heathy ground we found – in now heavy rain - several Northern Green Orchids. Whimbrel and Redshank were nearby, and these were abundant throughout our drives through the lush farmland that fills the upper fjord. Several pairs of Black-tailed Godwits inhabited the same marshy roadsides and these flew around calling constantly settling at times on fenceposts, always looking stunning in their rufous plumage with black and white trim. Just before the town of Dalvík we stopped to see a few Whooper Swans and young in the marshy areas, and Slavonian Grebes sheltering on a lake. The rain was incessant so we stopped in a small garage for a quick coffee – always free in these garages! The high mountains towering above us were dusted in snow, and the cold winds blowing straight down the valley. Past Dalvík the fjord quickly steepened and narrowed, the fells drew in closer and we drove atop cliffs looking down at the rough sea. Along the opposite side of the fjord were snow covered fells along the length of the fjord, the snowmelt feeding many waterfalls that plunged into the sea, also found on the side we were exploring. We stopped near one of these high narrow waterfalls - Migindisfoss, on our own side of the fjord. In torrential rain only the hardest botanists got out for any length of time, but we found Dwarf Cornel *Cornus suecica*, Coralroot Orchid *Corallorhiza trifida*, and a few tiny Lesser Twayblade *Listera cordata*. A clamber up slope along streams through heathy vegetation and arctic alpine plants had us finding Starry Saxifrage *Saxifraga stellaris*, Mossy Saxifrage and a few ferns such as Holly Fern *Polystichum lonchitis* and Oak Fern *Gymnocarpium dryopteris*, as well as Fir Clubmoss *Huperzia selago* and Alpine Clubmoss *Diphasiastrum alpinum*.

With no dry spot for a picnic we drove through a 3.2km tunnel to the town of Ólafsfjörður and had a quick look for any Harlequin Ducks in the harbour – we saw them but with the rain so heavy it was from the van. We ate our picnic in the van in the town wondering if the rain would stop and luckily it abated a little as we drove south and up onto a heath covered slopes towards a mountain pass, (Hreppendasúlur, east of Lagheidi) which in clear weather would have had glorious views of the mountain scenery around. However, we had thick mist and now it was extremely cold so any exploration of the wind-clipped dwarf shrub heath was brief. We found Cassiope *Cassiope hypnoides*, Sibbaldia *Sibbaldia procumbens*, pink-flowered Trailing Azalea *Loiseleuria procumbens* in a heath comprised mainly of Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, Crowberry and Dwarf Birch. With everyone cold and some cold and wet we drove back to Akureyri. The rain had stopped as we reached Akureyri, so Trausti dropped us off at Akureyri Botanic Gardens, a well set-out garden full of interesting plants including an area where supposedly all the native plants of Iceland are grown (including Northern Yellow-cress *Rorippa islandica* and Iceland-purslane *Koenigia islandica*). Some of the other beds had beautiful blue drifts of Himalayan Poppy (*Meconopsis* spp.) and quite a few less-hardy plants were also being grown. We were glad to get back to the warmth of comfortable Ongulstaðir hotel.

## Day 6      Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June      Mývatn

In sunshine – hooray! - we said farewell to our hotel and headed along the eastern shore of Eyjafjörður aiming to get to a small orchid valley just north of the town. However we first stopped at an intriguing museum (Laufas) where old turf houses had been lovingly restored and maintained as they would have been used in the nineteenth century. Each room was explained and it really was interesting to be told how in olden times Icelandic people survived in the sometimes inhospitable conditions e.g. people used to measure distance by how many seal-skin shoes they could get through. Trausti told us how in a recent interview with an old-timer when asked what had been the biggest improvement for Iceland living, the old-timer had replied “wellington boots!” The small cafe at the museum also had great coffee and cakes. Not far from here where we had to wait whilst a bridge was being repaired, a drift of pink alongside a ditch stopped us in our tracks – thousands of Hairy Stonecrop, growing with big cottony-headed Scheuchzer’s Cottongrass *Eriophorum scheuchzeri*, Alpine Bistort *Bistorta vivipara* and Rock Speedwell.

Driving further north the mountains either side of Eyjafjörður were dusted with fresh snow, and some of the sweeping landscapes were breathtaking. We reached Grenivík, where Snipe drummed around the football field. This is an area of wild coastal cliffs and where a small stream tumbled down the valley, we explored the blanket bog on the slopes. We found all of Iceland’s orchids here – seven species in total – including one very rare for the island, Common Twayblade *Listera ovata*; three plants in bud were found. The marshy slopes were home to hundreds of Heath Spotted Orchids, several horsetails, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Bog-bean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and Alpine Bartsia. On drier slopes were fine flowering Northern Green Orchid, Coral-root Orchid and Small White Orchid. On the grassy track near where we had our picnic in now quite warm weather, Pam had found some Alpine Gentian *Gentiana nivalis* in bud – so Trausti angled a foil contraption around it whilst we had our picnic to get the buds to open. One just about did before we left!

We continued along back roads alongside the pretty Fnjóská river, passing areas of the birch forest that once covered much of Iceland, indeed much replanting is currently underway, to Vaglaskógyr, one of Iceland’s largest forests. Here we found Heath Dog-violet *Viola canina*, a few Frog Orchids and along the forest ride, much Wood Crane’s-bill and among the trees was Small Cow-wheat *Melampyrum sylvaticum* which is rare in Iceland. Redpolls and Redwings were common, buzzing about the trees.

A short drive on and we reached Goðafoss, a decent enough introduction to the splendid waterfalls that grace Iceland, with twin broad falls plunging into turbulent bluish waters and racing off through a rough lava gorge. Several people were sight-seeing including a camera crew for some Icelandic documentary. Continuing on to Mývatn over bleak moorlands, near a farm Ian spotted a Short-eared Owl hunting low over the buildings – most caught a glimpse of it, but it disappeared over a hill. As we neared the lake at Mývatn, swirls of steam were rising in the distance, almost like an industrial landscape, though as we neared, the various pseudocraters and hills were all natural. As we drove along the Laxá river just before the lake we were looking out for Harlequin Duck, but didn’t see any. However as we drove along the shallow shores of the lake we saw Great Northern Diver, Scaup, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Wigeon, Long-tailed Ducks, Barrow’s Goldeneye and the odd Common Scoter. The numerous Red-necked Phalaropes seemed quite unperturbed by the weather (they winter at sea after all) and continued to paddle around among the waves.

On reaching the lake we had been warned that non-biting midges could be abundant (Mývatn = Midge Lake) and usually buzz around our ears, nose and mouth, trying to gain entry but thankfully we saw none! We arrived at the hotel in Reykjahlíð with a fine view over the lake and with Redshank and drumming Snipe in the grounds (the lakeside really) it was a wonderful vantage point to look out from the dining room window to see Slavonian Grebes, Wigeon and Red-throated Divers, as well as Scaup, Tufted Duck, Gadwall and Barrow's Goldeneye in the small shallow bays. Sunset was wonderful though it never got dark so the vista had an eerie light even at 3am.

## Day 7      Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July      Tectonic day - Mývatn

The day was cloudy and cool, but there were good views to the various volcanoes, flat-topped grey moberg volcanoes (produced through eruptions under ice) and the rugged lava flows from various eruptions in various stages of vegetation, and the pseudocrater swarms across the lake. The usual collection of waterfowl were on the lake with Scaup, Wigeon and several Slavonian Grebe, some nesting almost colonially on a small islet only fifty metres from the hotel. Our first destination on this day of all things volcanic was the strange formations of Dimmuborgir, an area full of lava towers, contorted spires, and lava arches emerging from regenerating birch woods, all a product of a collapsing magma chamber that left the towers high and dry. In the distance we could see the spectacular tephra cone of Hverfell, with flanks of fluted cinder and ash in an elegant broad crater. We explored Dimmuborgir with its range of plants, including several orchids. With a keen wind we drove half way back along the track to the road and stopped for lunch between some heath covered lava-flows, where a few midges started to make their presence known. By now it was spitting with rain so as we reached the next stop – Skútustaðir – to explore an area of pseudocraters. A quick walk around the paths in cold windy, and now wet weather and we were soon yearning for the warmth of the bus! There weren't many birds that could be seen from here so a little further on we pulled in along the lake and watched for a few minutes, and saw Red-necked Phalaropes, Red-breasted Mergansers and Wigeon sheltering from the keen wind. We returned to Reykjahlíð and for curiosity drove up to the hot springs where many people were taking the water. Trausti tried to persuade us to sample the springs but he had no takers! We had a quick warming coffee in the swish cafe, before returning to the hotel, a little earlier before checklists and a delicious dinner.

One of the most wonderful sights of the trip was seen on this day – a nest site of a pair of Gyr Falcons, with three almost fledged young. The female and male were both seen well in the scope and we were privileged to be able to see them. Due to the sensitivity of the site we cannot say where it is exactly.

## Day 8      Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July      Höfði, Goðafoss & Krafla

Another cloudy day, but with the weather being windy we had not had any midges to trouble us! We first visited the sulphur encrusted fumaroles and bubbling mud pot below the pastel-coloured ridge of Námafjall, an area of intense volcanic murmurings and equally huge sulphurous welts steaming away high on the slopes like festering sores. No plants or animals here so we drove back through Reykjahlíð along the east side of Mývatn to a small nature park of Höfði, an area of planted conifers and birches, with a pleasant trail. Here we saw Frog Orchids, Coral-root Orchids and Common Wintergreen *Pyrola minor* under the trees, where there was much Shade Horsetail and Wild Angelica. An outcrop had lots of Thyme, Wild Pansy

*Viola tricolor*, Hawkweed-leaved Treacle-mustard *Erysimum hieracifolium*, and a few plants of Tufted Saxifrage.

By now it had started to rain so we drove to the prominent lava crevasse at Grjotagjá, the product of a collapsing magma chamber and the long broad crack extends for some distance, the tall lava walls tilting at angles and filled with hot water. In this underground sauna the water gave off its sulphurous steam and it looked decidedly hellish! In places open to the air, vegetation thrived in the bottom of the warm crevice with carpets of Oak Fern *Gymnocarpium dryopteris*. We had lunch here in the van as the rain became more torrential and Trausti thought that a return visit to Goðafoss was better than driving up to the higher area of Krafla, where mists would obscure the views of the active volcanic areas. We drove to Goðafoss and the rain had not stopped – in fact it was heavier when we arrived! Undaunted we traipsed to the falls which was very atmospheric in the rain and mists. On the return Trausti spotted a Merlin perched under the bridge getting a good soaking and with the scope handy we had some super views of this bedraggled bird. Again we got very wet so we called in the nearest cafe/shop nearby where we warmed up and dried and stocked up on REAL liquorice, a favourite van snack provided by Ian! The plan was to then return to the hotel early and if it cleared in the evening we would explore Krafla – after all it never got dark so we could go anytime!

When we returned to the hotel the weather was clearing and we could see blue sky, so after dinner most of the group joined Trausti for a whistle-stop tour of Krafla. This was a fascinating area of active volcanism. There was a water filled Viti explosion crater and then various lava flows. The most recent were jet black and emitted from the large steaming fissure line of Leirhnjúkur. As we walked over the flows the ground was hot beneath our feet. Impressive lava forms were everywhere and the breeze whipped up the steam creating more mysterious shapes in the rocks, the evening light bathing the landscape in all sorts of vivid colours. The flows extended to the horizon sweeping around older volcanic cones and down towards the lake. Families of Wheatears made the most of the abundant nest sites and the hummocky short heath was studded with the white bells of Cassiope and patches of Trailing Azalea, and Alpine Cat's-foot *Antennaria alpina*. On one level area where Trausti had on previous trips seen the rare Small Adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum azoricum*, we searched and found thousands of the small fronds in the short heathy turf amongst mosses, Thyme, Cold Eyebright *Euphrasia frigida* and Alpine Clubmoss. Returning to the hotel we glimpsed a beautiful rainbow before turning in, as the resident Redshank called and Snipe drummed near the hotel.

## Day 9      Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July      Húsavík; Ásbyrgi & Detifoss

At last a bright and sunny morning. Our exploration today was around the northern coast and back inland to Iceland's largest waterfall – Dettifoss. Driving north beyond Mývatn we reached the inlet at Laxámyri, where Mastermind host Magnus Magnusson was born. Near here is an area of old lava flow now vegetated with scrubby and heathy plants. Driving along a small lane off the main road towards Knútsstaðir, a female Ptarmigan with several fluffy chicks scooted in front of the van. We stopped here to explore an area of old *hornitos* (hornito = a small, beehive-shaped mound built up from clots of molten lava ejected from an underlying volcanic tube). One was large enough for the entire group (11 of us) to get into. Around the entrance of the hornito Ian pointed out the moss *Schistostega pennata*, (sometimes called Goblin's Gold) which in the low light appeared to glow – a trick of the light reflecting off the moss. In the heathy turf some nice flowering Coral-root Orchids were found and in the grassy track a flowering Alpine Gentian with brilliant blue flowers was found by Beryl.

We drove north to Húsavík on the north coast, where Trausti had to fix something on the van, so we had time to explore the small port. The hills surrounding the port were blue with Nootka Lupin, and the harbour with its colourful sun-lit boats and snow-capped mountain backdrop made terrific photo opportunities. Female Eiders with several chicks corralled themselves on a slipway and Gulls and Fulmars swirled around the harbour. After morning coffees and some quick shopping (no one opted for a visit to the world famous Phallogological Museum!) we drove north, intending to picnic by a beach north of Tunguvellir, but half way down, the steep track appeared to have been half washed away so we returned, with Whimbrel flying up as we drove along, to the main road. We stopped on a low area next to the sea on a small headland between the bays of Sandvík and Breiðavík. Here in the sunshine we ate our picnic on grassy mounds above a boulder beach, where Sea Sandwort was abundant in between the smooth boulders. There was a lot of sun-bleached and sea-worn timber washed up on the beach; Trausti told us that they had been washed from rivers from Northern Russia in storms. We watched Snow Buntings flit between the timbers as Great Skuas passed by close above us. In the grassy track near where the van was parked some wonderful Alpine Gentians were found, one with at least nine flowers fully open, as well as some small Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, and one plant of Northern Gentian *Gentianella aurea*.

Moving on around the Tjörnes peninsula we stopped to look at the cliffs overlooking the Bakkalhaup floodplain and saw several Puffins very close up, and watched them as they flew up onto and off the cliff. Several Fulmar were also seen on nests. Crossing the broad plain there were numerous lakes and ponds that arose after earthquakes caused land subsidence evidenced further on with large faults and slumped areas. We stopped at Víkingavatn where broad grassy fields near the lake were explored for birds but there was nothing much around. Further on we drove up to near the impressive horseshoe-shaped cliffs of Ásbyrgi; probably formed by a combination of subsidence and massive river erosion, but today the canyon floor is densely forested and we spent some time exploring this. By now it was very warm, at least 20°C, and being well sheltered we looked around the lush birch woods more comfortably. The ground flora consisted of swathes of Wood Crane's-bill, Shade Horsetail and Lady's Mantle *Alchemilla* spp., punctuated by many clumps of Common Wintergreen *Pyrola minor*. Near a pond, the former plunge pool of the immense falls that tumbled over the cliffs above, we made a short climb partly up one of walls which offered a splendid view of the canyon system.

We continued across the extensive heathland of Jökulsárgljúfur National Park to just above Hafragilisfoss. From here we could look down the deep valley onto the Hafragilisfoss waterfall. The water coming straight from the glaciers further south was white and brown with glacial debris, mingling with clear water, deep blue in the clear weather, coming off local streams. The bare ground around the path was a rich red in colour and looked like Cornish mine-waste! However there were flowering patches of Mountain Avens, Alpine Mouse-ear, Arctic Sandwort, Moss Campion and Trailing Azalea in places and a few plants of Tufted Saxifrage amongst rocks.

A little further on we stopped at Dettifoss, Europe's most powerful waterfall, disgorging up to five hundred cubic metres of very silty water per second, thundering over the forty-four metre drop. The place was awe-inspiring with the immense flow of water thundering into the valley, and swirls of mist keeping the western side of the falls permanently damp and therefore lush and green. Alpine Bartsia and lots of Mountain Avens coloured the valley sides. We drove back to Myvatn via a bumpy track roughly following the Jökulsá river, braided in places. The interior was windswept and almost desert-like with patches of vegetation in places. A few Pink-footed Geese were seen in the river, Snow Buntings flew alongside the van in places and Whimbrel and Golden Plover were seen regularly along the track. On reaching smooth tarmac we all rejoiced!

The drive back to Reykjahlíð was quiet with most of the group dropping off to sleep after the long day.

After dinner some of the group who hadn't visited Krafla the night before opted for an extra trip so several of us revisited the site, though with keen winds it was very cold. The spectacular scenery was again admired and all the species seen again, particularly good was the thousands of the Small Adder's-tongue fern in the short turf.

## Day 10      Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July      the Kjölur Route

With a long day ahead we departed Mývatn early. Retracing the road past Goðafoss, and onto Akureyri we stopped briefly for a coffee and watched for any birds on Eyjafjörður. Just past Akureyri we stopped along the riverbed of the Hörgá river, where in the warm sunshine we admired the drifts of pink Arctic Riverbeauty, colourful with yellow buttercups between. A little further on another photo stop for Marsh Marigolds *Caltha palustris* and Garden Angelica *Angelica archangelica* was called for, as was another near a wonderful view across the valley towards needle-like mountain peaks. We stopped for lunch at the small turf church at Víðimýri.

We reached the start of the Kjölur Route that heads across Iceland's harsh interior, passing at first a series of lakes that fed a hydroelectric project then across the undulating heath. Near Áfangafell, a high point in the road with stupendous views across the interior towards the large icecap of Höfsjökull. Around the rocky heath Beryl and Pam found some lovely flowering Marsh Saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus*, and some Sibbaldia but the Purple Saxifrage *Saxifraga oppositifolia* was well over. The next stop at Hveravellir, a fascinating complex of geothermal features, was productive. Whilst Diane and Trausti took advantage of the thermal pools, the rest explored the damp and warm areas around the steam-vents and various bubbling, steaming, silica crystal encrusted hot pools, brilliant sky blue pools and a fizzing sulphatera. A search of the moorland found many Frog Orchids, some with reddish flowers, Alpine Pearlwort *Sagina saginoides*, Alpine Speedwell *Veronica alpina*, Dwarf Fleabane *Erigeron uniflorus*, Dwarf Cudweed *Gnaphalium supinum* and a few Small Adder's-tongue fern in the short turf near a warm pool.

Beyond Hveravellir the landscape becomes drier and bleaker, but views open out towards the twin icecaps of Höfsjökull and Langjökull, with the Kerlingarfjöll range in between. The track was very rough in places and this is not a place to break down or have a puncture! Not far along the road we saw a small car with a tyre completely off and the occupants completely unprepared and at a loss what to do. Without a pause Trausti stopped the van and was soon out mending the wheel and puncture for the hapless people. A little exploring whilst waiting only gave some nice cushions of flowering Moss Campion and precious little else in vegetation. Unfortunately we were plagued by biting blackflies as we explored or watched the repair, so the onlookers went back in the van! With the car mobile we left them and carried on along the barren interior marvelling at the scenery. One good view was around Hvitárvatn lake which the glaciers of Langjökull feed: Trausti explained how the glacier was retreating and we could see this clearly. The road seemed endless but as we reached Gulfoss (and smooth tarmac) we were getting close to the south coast and our hotel near Hveragerði. We drove through the area which had had a very recent earthquake and Trausti told us of people who had to replace all their crockery. He said the people locally were most upset when the off-licence lost most of its bottles!

## Day 11 Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July

## Pingvellir, Geysir & Gullfoss

It was a beautiful sunny morning with glorious clear blue skies and crystal clear visibility. We drove towards Pingvellir and off a minor road at Alviðra on the Hvítá river watched a pair of Black-tailed Godwits scold us noisily near the van and Whimbrel also. The drive around the large lake of Þingvallenvatn was picturesque and as we approached Pingvellir (Þingvellir = *Assembly Plains*), we could see the massive volcanic fissures on the ridge. This is also the place where some people will tell you that you can have one foot in North America and one in Europe, as it is where the North American and Eurasian continental plates are physically tearing apart. However Trausti told us that in fact the area is much wider, in some places a few Kms wide. Þingvellir is also the site of the Alþing (or General Assembly), the historic seat of Iceland's government. It is a favourite stop on the tourist *Golden Circle* tour of much of Southwest Iceland's famous sites. We started off at Valhöll, which was thronging with coach loads of tourists of all nationalities, and walked down the deep fissure and along the rift wall of Allmanagjá. There was Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis* and Oblong Woodsia in the crevices and Wood Crane's-bill, buttercups and Shade Horsetail was everywhere. After a short stop at the small twenty-metre high Öxarárfoss and water-filled fissures in the plains below, we drove to a small promontory south of Valhöll (Rauðukusunes) beside Þingvallenvatn, where in brilliant sunshine and warm weather we picnicked near families of Greylag Geese. We could hear Great Northern and Red-throated Divers calling in the distance on the lake.

After lunch we drove along the northern end of the lake and then through hills to Geysir, where we joined many others marvel at the impressive waterspout Strokkur at the Geysir complex. Here there were more fantastic silica lined blue pools and steam vents with the added attraction of great plumes of very hot (85°C) water firing high into the air every few minutes. Around this steamy mass grew patches of Self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*, Thyme and swathes of Silverweed *Potentilla anserina* and a closer examination of the mossy stream banks found a colony of the diminutive and very rare Small Adder's-tongue Fern.

We drove to the impressive twin cascade of Gullfoss which stretches across a broad cataract, tumbling white waters into the canyon below. Gullfoss means *Golden Falls* perhaps because there is almost a permanent rainbow in the mist from the waters, promising pots of gold at either end? The mist drenched surroundings supported a lush plant life with masses of Water Avens, Wood Crane's-bill, bedstraws, Thrift and Wild Strawberry. Moonwort was found in the turf also. We drove back through Geysir and as it was getting late we stopped only briefly at an impressive flooded Tephra cone of Kerið, and watched a couple of Raven on the cone wall. The last stops for the day was by the coast at Stokkseyri, where the beach was black with volcanic ash covered in abundant Oysterplant, Sea-rocket *Cakile maritima* subspecies *islandica* and Silverweed. Arctic Terns and gulls flew over the sea and at the beach further along at Eyrarbakki we saw several Eider and Red-breasted Mergansers. A short drive back to the hotel and with an early start the next day we had dinner, after which the group thanked Trausti for his excellent commentary on Iceland's history, folklore and wildlife, safe-driving and sense of humour, and soon retired, but first saying farewell to Barrie who was staying a few days longer, and David and Kay, who had different flights the next day.

## Day 12 Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July

## Reykjavík and UK

A very early start and drive in mist and rain so we were not able to see much along the way. We arrived at the airport in plenty of time. We were soon on our way home with lots of good memories of the fascinating and beautiful country of Iceland.

## Summary of locations

- Day 1 Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2008 – Heathrow to Reykjavík, transfer to Grundarfjörður, Snæfellsness Peninsula
- Day 2 30<sup>th</sup> June Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008 – Snæfellsness peninsula: Mávahlíðarrið; Ólafsvík; Rif; Öndverðarnes; Saxhóll; Djúpalónssandur; Þufubjarg; Arnarstapi; Buðir
- Day 3 Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2008 – Flatey; Hraunsvík; Berserkjahraun
- Day 4 Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June To Eyjafjörður - transfer to Akureyri: Laxárdalur Valley; Vatnsdalshólar; Blönduós; Heradsvotn; Akureyri
- Day 5 Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June West coast of Eyjafjörður – Akureyri; Dalvík; Migindisfoss; Ólafsfjörður; Hreppendasútur, east of (Lagheidi); Akureyri Botanic Garden
- Day 6 Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008 East coast of Eyjafjörður and Mývatn – Akureyri to Mývatn: Laufas; Eyjafjörður, north of Grenivík (orchid valley); Vaglaskógyr; Goðafoss
- Day 7 Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 – Tectonic day - Mývatn: Dimmuborgir; Skútustaðir; clockwise drive around Mývatn
- Day 8 Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008 – Námafjall; Höfði; Grótagjá; Goðafoss; Krafla
- Day 9 Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008 – Laxámyri; Knútsstaðir, near; Húsavík; Sandvík; Skarfaflos; Víkingavatn; Ásbyrgi; Hafragilisfoss; Detifoss; Krafla
- Day 10 Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July - Across the interior the Kjölnur Route – Öxnadalur; Víðimýri; Áfangafell; Hveravellir; Hveragerði; (Nordurjökull)
- Day 11 Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July - Thorsadalur – Þingvellir; Geysir; Gullfoss; Kerið; Stokkseyri; Eyrarbakki
- Day 12 Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July - Reykjavík and UK

## Systematic List Number 1      Plants

A combined list from all of the previous tours and 2008 - the vast majority are found each year. Species in square [brackets] were not noted in 2008, though this does not mean they are not present.

<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Widespread
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Scattered, including Geysir 2008
<i>Alchemilla alpina</i>	Widespread, especially in drier areas
<i>Alchemilla vulgaris</i>	Widespread, preferring damper sites
[ <i>Alopecurus aequalis</i> ]	Not seen in 2008]
<i>Alopecurus geniculatus</i>	Snaefellsness 2008
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Common in grassy areas 2008
<i>Angelica archangelica</i>	Streamsides, magnificent around Mývatn
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Scarce around fjords
<i>Antennaria alpina</i>	Hummocky moorland, Krafla
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> (or <i>A. alpinum</i> )	Common 2008
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Common in some fertile lowland areas
<i>Anthyllis vulneriana</i>	Common along roadsides near Reykjavik
<i>Arabis alpina</i>	Widespread
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Common in acid heath
<i>Arenaria norvegica</i>	In area around Mývatn Lake
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Widespread in sandy habitats, cliff tops or lava fields
[ <i>Athyrium distentifolium</i> ]	Rare. Damp hollows on pass between Olafsfjörður & Siglufjörður]
[ <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> ]	Lava fissures on Snaefellsness]
<i>Atriplex glabriuscula</i>	On beach Stokkseyri
[ <i>Atriplex longipes</i> ]	Widespread]
<i>Bartsia alpina</i>	Very common in heaths including in 2008 beside Dettifoss, and north of Grenivik
<i>Betula nana</i>	Common in 2008
<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Common in 2008 – extensive wood at Vaglaskógur
[ <i>Botrychium lanceolatum</i> ]	Rare. Bird cliffs at Londrangar] looked for in 2008
<i>Botrychium lunaria</i>	Common on heaths
<i>Cakile maritima</i> subsp. <i>islandica</i>	Stokkseyri
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Abundant acid heath component
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Common in ditches around fjords
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Widespread
<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Abundant in all damp/wet areas
<i>Cardaminopsis petraea</i>	Attractive crucifer from sandy areas & lava fields
<i>Carex atrata</i>	Eyjafljóður, scattered 2008
<i>Carex bigelowii</i>	Scattered 2008
<i>Carex capillaris</i>	Eyjafljóður, scattered 2008
<i>Carex capitata</i>	Scattered around Mývatn Lake area 2008
<i>Carex echinata</i>	Bogs north of Grenivik
[ <i>Carex glabra</i> ]	
<i>Carex glacialis</i>	Dimmuborgir 2008
<i>Carex lyngbyei</i>	Common in marshy places 2008
<i>Carex maritima</i>	Öndverðarnes 2008
[ <i>Carex microglochin</i> ]	
<i>Carex nigra</i>	Common 2008
<i>Carex pilulifera</i>	Snaefellsness 2008
<i>Carex rostrata</i>	Common 2008
<i>Carex saxatilis</i>	Krafla 2008
<i>Carex vaginata</i>	Grassland in Fnjoskadalur; scattered in damp places 2008
<i>Cassiope hypnoides</i>	Common on acid heaths
<i>Cerastium alpinum</i>	Widespread on heaths and dry slopes
<i>Cerastium cerastoides</i>	Moist soils and marshes, common 2008

<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Roadsides, fields edges, etc
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Scarce in fjords
<i>Chamomilla suaveolens</i> syn. <i>Matricaria discoidea</i>	Scattered
[ <i>Cirsium arvense</i> ]	Scarce, near Reykjavik]
<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>	Scattered near coasts in north and west 2008
<i>Coeloglossum viride</i>	Widespread and often common in heaths; fine red-tinged flowered specimens at Hveravellir 2008
<i>Corallorhiza trifida</i>	Widespread and common in heaths; seen at Migindisfoss, near Knutsborg hornito and north of Grenivik 2008
<i>Cornus suecica</i>	Migindifoss, above
<i>Cystopteris fragilis</i>	Lava crevices in Laxa valley. Widespread 2008
<i>Dactylorhiza maculata</i>	Acid heaths near Olafsfjodur & Þingvellir; Saxhóll, north of Grenivik 2008
<i>Deschampsia alpina</i>	Scattered 2008
<i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i>	Widespread
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	Widespread e.g. Snaefellsness
<i>Diphasiastrum alpinum</i>	Cliff heaths along Eyjafjorður & Olafsfjodur
<i>Draba incana</i>	Scattered
<i>Draba norvegica</i>	Dry eroded heaths, bare areas
<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Common in blanket bog north of Grenivik
<i>Dryas octopetala</i>	Abundant on heaths, sandy habitats, etc
[ <i>Dryopteris expansa</i> ]	Lava fissures on Snaefellsness]
[ <i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> ]	Lava fissures on Snaefellsness]
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	Scattered in wet places 2008
<i>Eleocharis quinqueflora</i>	Hveravellir 2008
<i>Empetrum nigrum</i>	Abundant on upland heaths
<i>Epilobium alsinifolium</i>	Bog north of Grenivik 2008
<i>Epilobium anagallidifolium</i>	Hreppendasútur, east of (near Lagheidi mountain)
<i>Epilobium collinum</i>	Hraunsvík
[ <i>Epilobium hornemannii</i> ]	Widespread in rivulets and streamsides 2002]
<i>Epilobium latifolium</i>	Jokulsa River near Heradsvotn (Skagafjörður Valley); Öxnadalur
<i>Epilobium palustre</i>	Gullfoss
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Widespread
<i>Equisetum fluviatile</i>	Blanket bog north of Grenivik
<i>Equisetum hyemale</i>	Scattered, including north of Grenivik 2008
<i>Equisetum palustre</i>	Scattered, including north of Grenivik 2008
<i>Equisetum pratense</i>	Common 2008
<i>Equisetum variegatum</i>	Dry sandy areas of Jokulsa valley; common in 2008
<i>Equisetum x trachydon</i>	Bog north of Grenivik 2008 with both parents
( <i>E. hymale</i> x <i>E. variegatum</i> )	
<i>Erigeron borealis</i>	Common and widespread
<i>Erigeron uniflorus</i>	Hveravellir 2008
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	Common in lowland marshes
<i>Eriophorum scheuchzeri</i>	Common in lowland marshes
<i>Erophila verna</i>	Scattered, around Mývatn
<i>Erysimum hieracifolium</i>	Common at Skútustaðir pseudocrater swarm, Höfði
<i>Euphrasia frigida</i>	Geysir 2001; Krafla 2008
[ <i>Festuca pratensis</i> ]	
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Common 2008
<i>Festuca vivipara</i>	Grassland. Scattered, mostly north in 2008
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Ditches in lowlands
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Beside Gullfoss 2008
<i>Galium boreale</i>	Grassy heaths and slopes including Geysir
<i>Galium normanii</i>	Dry slopes, heaths and gravelly ground, common 2008
<i>Galium uliginosum</i>	Boggy grassland north of Grenivik, Asbyrgi 2006 and 2008
<i>Galium verum</i>	Common in moors

<i>Gentiana nivalis</i>	Sunny roadside heaths and short grassland including at Sandvik and north of Grenivik 2008
<i>Gentianella campestris</i>	Ytri-Vik, Eyjafjörður 2003; Hveravellir 2008
<i>Gentianella aurea</i>	On grassy track, Sandvik 2008
<i>Geranium sylvaticum</i>	Birchwoods, shaded places, common
<i>Geum rivale</i>	Lowland marshes & Geysir
<i>Gnaphalium supinum</i>	Hveravellir 2008
[ <i>Gnaphalium norvegicum</i>	Olafsfjörður pass]
<i>Gymnocarpium dryopteris</i>	Lava fissures and woodland, scattered 2008
[ <i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	Partly naturalised. Scattered esp. Eyjafjörður]
<i>Heracleum spondylium</i>	Scattered in lowlands
[ <i>Hieracium alpinum</i>	Common hawkweed on Kjölur route 2002]
<i>Hieracium sp.</i>	Common
<i>Hierochloa odorata</i>	Scattered in shaded places in north 2008
<i>Hippuris vulgaris</i>	Very common in marshes
<i>Honckenya peploides</i>	Coastal sands, scattered
<i>Huperzia selago</i>	Heaths e.g. Snaefellsness & Eyjafjörður
[ <i>Juncus alpinus</i> ]	
[ <i>Juncus hybridus</i> ]	
<i>Juncus arcticus</i>	Scattered in north and interior 2008
<i>Juncus bulbosus</i>	Scattered in wet places 2008
<i>Juncus filiformis</i>	High bogs of Olafsfjörður pass; north of Grenivik 2008
<i>Juncus trifidus</i>	Common on heathland
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Moors, scattered seen mostly in north
<i>Kobresia myosuroides</i>	Heaths near Gulfoss; scattered in north 2008
<i>Lamium album</i>	Scattered e.g. hotel at Mývatn
<i>Lathyrus japonicus</i> ssp. <i>maritimus</i>	Beautiful pea. Dune slacks & cliffs Snaefellsness
[ <i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Cliff tops at Asbyrgi 2001]
<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	Lowland fjords, scattered
<i>Leymus arenarius</i>	Common on beaches around coast 2008
<i>Ligusticum scoticum</i>	Low cliffs near Djúpálónssandur andesite beach.
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	Moorland north of Grenivik
<i>Listera cordata</i>	In shady lava cracks in Aðaldalur Valley; Boggy grassland north of Grenivik and near Migindisfoss 2008
<i>Loiseluria procumbens</i>	Common on acid heaths
<i>Lupinus nootkatensis</i>	Very common, sown in large quantities
<i>Luzula arcuata</i>	Scattered in north 2008
<i>Luzula multiflora</i>	Common 2008
<i>Luzula spicata</i>	Common 2008
<i>Lychnis alpina</i>	Common in heaths and moors
[ <i>Lycopodium annotinum</i>	Cliff heaths along Eyjafjörður 2002]
<i>Matricaria maritima</i> syn.	Coastal roadsides, unusually big flowers
<i>Tripleurospermum maritimum</i>	
<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	Common in lowland ditches and pools
<i>Mertensia maritima</i>	Stony coasts including Öndverðarnes, Stokkseyri Höfði 2008
<i>Milium effusum</i>	Scattered 2008
<i>Minuartia rubella</i>	Bogs north of Grenivik before 2008: scattered 2008
<i>Montia fontana</i>	Widespread in grassy heaths
<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>	Ponds at Rif 2008
<i>Myriophyllum alternifolium</i>	Common in lowland fjord areas
<i>Myrrhis odorata</i>	Scattered 2008
<i>Nardus stricta</i>	Rare. Seen at three sites near to heat in 2008: 1000s in heath on almost fresh lava on Krafla trail; a few in short turf at Hveravellir; and a few Geysir in mossy herb rich flats
<i>Ophioglossum azoricum</i>	
<i>Orthilia secunda</i>	Dimmuborgir and other birch heaths
<i>Oxyria digyna</i>	Very common
<i>Papaver nudicaule</i>	Roadsides Dalvík 2008
<i>Papaver radicum</i>	RoadsideS through Berserkjahraun 2008

<i>Paris quadrifolia</i>	Rare. Lava fissures on Snaefellsness (2006) and near Mývatn; Buðir 2008
<i>Parnassia palustris</i> [ <i>Pedicularis flammea</i> <i>Phegopteris connectilis</i>	Scarce in flower, but common Common, but over in moors near Hverellir 2002] Þingvellir, (at base of main fissure) 2008. Identified as <i>Thelypteris phegopteris</i> in previous reports.
<i>Phleum alpinum</i> <i>Phleum pratense</i> <i>Phyllodoce caerulea</i>	High areas in north, 2008 Probably as sown grass at Asbyrgi; Akureyri 2008 Rare. Cliffs along Eyjafjörður 2002 – not refound 2003/6 or 2008
<i>Pilosella islandica</i> <i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i> <i>Plantago major</i> <i>Plantago maritima</i> <i>Platanthera hyperborea</i> <i>Poa alpina</i> <i>Poa annua</i> <i>Poa glauca</i> <i>Poa nemoralis</i> <i>Poa pratensis</i> <i>Polygonum aviculare</i> <i>Polygonum viviparum</i> <i>Polystichum lonchitis</i>	Roadside near Varmalid 2001; scattered 2008 Abundant in damp areas, roadsides, etc Geysir area, Reykjavik, etc; scattered 2008 Common in north-east Abundant in heath communities Common in north, 2008 Widespread 2008 Common in north, 2008 In Mývatn area 2008 Akureyri 2008 Scattered 2008 Abundant in many habitats Streamsides & depressions Eyjafjörður, near Migindisfoss
[ <i>Potamogeton alpinus</i> <i>Potentilla anserina</i> <i>Potentilla crantzii</i> <i>Potentilla palustris</i> <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> <i>Pseudorchis albida</i> ssp. <i>straminea</i> [ <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> ] <i>Pyrola minor</i> <i>Ranunculus acris</i> <i>Ranunculus hyperboreus</i> <i>Ranunculus repens</i> [ <i>Ranunculus reptans</i> <i>Ranunculus trichophyllus</i> <i>Rhinanthus minor</i> <i>Rhodiola rosea</i>	Common pondweed at Thingvellir 2002] Sandy soil near shore & volcanic areas Common in grassland, heath & scree Common in damp meadows & bogs Mývatn; Geysir 2008 Very common  Common Widespread in fields, marshes and ditches Ditches near Skútustaðir 2008 Scarce, near Grundarfjörður Near Mossfell, on wet ground] Thermal spring run-off at Hveravellir 2008 Common in grassy places 2008 Infrequent, often restricted to cliffs; Saxhóll
<i>Rubus saxatilis</i> <i>Rumex acetosa</i> <i>Rumex acetosella</i> <i>Rumex longifolius</i> <i>Sagina nodosa</i> <i>Sagina procumbens</i> <i>Sagina saginoides</i> <i>Salix callicarpaea</i> syn. <i>S. glauca</i> ssp. <i>callicarpaea</i> <i>Salix herbacea</i> <i>Salix lanata</i> <i>Salix phyllicifolia</i> [ <i>Sambucus racemosus</i> <i>Saxifraga caespitosa</i> [ <i>Saxifraga cernua</i> <i>Saxifraga hirculus</i> <i>Saxifraga hypnoides</i> <i>Saxifraga nivalis</i> <i>Saxifraga oppositifolia</i> [ <i>Saxifraga rivularis</i> [ <i>Saxifraga rosacea</i> <i>Saxifraga stellaris</i>	Woods and grassy slopes Widespread 2008 Widespread 2008 Widespread 2008 Roadsides Gravelly soil near rivers, shores and springs, common Scattered Widespread 2008 Widespread 2008 Widespread 2008 Widespread 2008 Lowlands] Common on upland moors, streamsides Mývatn area 2002] Afaðafell, north of Hveravellir, several in flower Common in drier rocky places; Saxhóll Snaefellsness Common but not in flower, in fruit north of Hveravellir Damp areas beside Oxadalsá River] Mossfell] Common in wet areas

<i>Saxifraga tenuis</i>	Rocks beside road near Höfði 2008
<i>Sedum acre</i>	Very common in open gravelly soil
<i>Sedum annuum</i>	Scattered
<i>Sedum villosum</i>	Very common in wet areas
<i>Selaginella selaginoides</i>	Dry heaths and pastures, common 2008
<i>Sibbaldia procumbens</i>	Scattered in heaths including Hreppsendasúður, east of (near Lagheidi mountain)
<i>Silene acaulis</i>	Abundant in a wide range of habitats
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Widespread
<i>Silene uniflora</i> syn. <i>S. maritimum</i>	Dry areas, including interior
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Component of birch woods & often planted
<i>Sparganium hyperboreum</i>	Pools and marshes e.g. near Goðafoss 2002
<i>Spergula arvensis</i>	Scattered near Grundarfjörður
[ <i>Stellaria humifusa</i> ]	
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Widespread
<i>Stellaria nemorum</i>	Höfði
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Widespread
<i>Thalictrum alpinum</i>	Easily overlooked on moors, common 2008
<i>Thymus praecox</i> ssp. <i>arcticus</i>	Very common roadsides, moors, etc
<i>Tofieldia pusilla</i>	Very common
<i>Trichophorum caespitosum</i>	Eyjafljörður 2008
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Pastures
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	Pastures
<i>Triglochin palustris</i>	Attractive Arrowgrass, bogs and damp places 2002; Hveravellir 2008
<i>Triticum spicatum</i> ssp. <i>pilosiglume</i>	Scattered 2008
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	Near Reykjavik
[ <i>Urtica dioica</i> ]	Scarce around Akureyri]
<i>Vaccinium microcarpum</i>	Rare. Blanket bogs north of Grenivík 2002 and 2008
<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	Common in heaths
<i>Vaccinium uliginosum</i>	Abundant heath component
<i>Valeriana sambucifolia</i>	Höfði 2008
<i>Veronica alpina</i>	Common on slopes & by streams
<i>Veronica fruticans</i>	Sunny, dry slopes and heath, including Buðir
<i>Veronica officinalis</i>	Near Grenivík before 2008; Grassy slopes Snaefellsness 2008
<i>Veronica scutellata</i>	Around lakes and ponds, north of Grenivík 2008
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Brooklets & ditches, mostly at Mývatn
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Scattered in lowlands
<i>Viola canina</i>	Heaths and moors, frequent
<i>Viola palustris</i>	Frequent in bogs
<i>Viola tricolor</i>	Widespread on roadsides
<i>Woodsia ilvensis</i>	On mossy rock beside road to Djúpalónssandur and Allmanagjá, Þingvellir

## Systematic List Number 2

## Birds & Mammals

The following list includes all the species seen. Numbers refer to the number of days a species was seen e.g. 5/11 means the species was seen on five days during the holiday.

Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Regular sightings on lakes and coastal areas 6/11
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Widespread with some fine views 6/11
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Common at Mývatn 7/11
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Very common, even nesting well inland on gorge cliffs 9/11
Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Scarce 2/11
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Mostly near Grundarfjordur, also off Tjornes headland 4/11
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Snaefellsness 1/11
Whooper's Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Common and widespread, with large aggregations in places 10/11
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Braided river channels, many seen in River Heradvotn (Skagafjörður Valley) 3/11
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Common and widespread 11/11
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	Common at Mývatn 7/11
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Common at Mývatn 6/11
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Eyjafjörður wetlands and Mývatn 7/11
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Common and widespread 11/11
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Mývatn 1/11
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Common and widespread 10/11
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Common, especially at Mývatn 7/11
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Very common coastal duck 9/11
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	Rarely seen this year; on Snaefellsness and near Dalvík 2/11
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Only on Mývatn 2/11
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Only on Mývatn 1/11
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	One on Lake Mývatn – ID by Trausti. Rare vagrant here.
Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>	Common on Mývatn 5/11
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Very common throughout Iceland on lakes and coastal areas 10/11
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	2 near Grundarfjordur
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Only in the north, with one (bedraggled) well seen at Gulfoss 3/11
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	Excellent views of 2 adults and 3 juveniles at secret nesting site at Mývatn 1/11
Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus</i>	Scattered; 1 with young seen at Knutsborg hornito, SW of Húsavík 2/11
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Common around coasts and lowlands 9/11
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Common 7/11
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Very common on heaths and farmland 11/11
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	Snaefellsness and Eyjafjörður mudflats 2/11
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Rare, Flatey 1/11
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Very common and obvious wader with wonderful drumming displays in all lowland areas 11/11
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Common and widespread, a handsome wader 10/11

Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Very common and vocal 11/11
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Very common and even more vocal than the previous species 11/11
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Widespread and common on pools and rivers, seen well at Ólafsvík 9/11
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Very common 10/11
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Tjornes peninsula, seen well by the coast 1/11
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Widespread and common 11/11
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	Widespread 4/11
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Common 9/11
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Scattered, but common where it occurred, often replaced by Glaucous Gulls 2/11
Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucooides</i>	Seen at Ólafsvík 1/11
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Very common on Snaefellsness coasts 4/11
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Common and widespread in coastal areas 6/11
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Very common around harbours and coastal breeding colonies 4/11
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Very common 11/11
Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	Only on Snaefellsness, colony at Þufubjarg 1/11
Brunnich's Guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>	Only on Snaefellsness, colony at Þufubjarg 1/11
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	Only on Snaefellsness, colony at Þufubjarg 1/11
Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>	Very close views on Flatey where they breed almost among the houses 1/11
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Scattered around coasts, plenty on and around Flatey, and close views on Tjornes headland 2/11
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	One near farm south of Lauger between Goðfoss and Mývatn 1/11
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Very common 10/11
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Very common 9/11
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Scattered 6/11
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Common and widespread 10/11
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Very common 11/11
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Very common 11/11
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Snaefellsness and towns of the north 4/11
Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Common in birch woods 7/11
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Common in various open rocky habitats, around towns and interior desert. Seen well on Tjornes peninsula 6/11
Common Seal		Flatey
Arctic Fox		1 near Öndverðarnes