

Iceland, May 27th-30th 2012



Razorbill and Thick-billed Murres at Svörtuloft, Snæfellsnes.

Contact

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Highlights

- Amazing numbers of waterbirds at Mývatn
- Drive-in at Laxá River for Barrow's Goldeneye and Harlequin Duck
- Good numbers of north-bound Sanderlings and Purple Sandpipers
- Thousands of Brent Geese migrating north at Öndverðarnes, heading for Greenland(!)
- Auks at Svörtuloft, including Thick-billed Murre
- A close encounter with an Arctic Fox
- Great Northern Loons at their only breeding ground in Europe

Summary

After a few days with friends in Reykjavik, I had two extra days by myself for birding. I had three main targets: Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye and Thick-billed Murre. After scanning the web, I soon decided to go for Mývatn and Snæfellsnes. Although all three species might be possible around Reykjavik, but it would be a gamble since it was hard to find any clear stake-outs (at least in early summer). So unfortunately a LOT of driving but on the other hand I would see much of the country. Road conditions were usually perfect (at least

when paved) and landscapes were always dramatic, so it was a rather joyful drive in absolutely stunning clear blue skies. Besides breeding Thick-billed Murres at Snæfellsnes I had a small hope of finding Killer Whales, not seldomly seen here at the end of May or beginning of June. However I couldn't find any despite a few hours of intense scanning.

Itinerary

- 27.5: Late afternoon: Rental car pick-up at Keflavik. Quick birding at Sandgerdi. Evening at Seltjarnarnes. Late evening drive toward Mývatn. Night in car somewhere W of Akureyri.
- 28.5: Further on to Mývatn. Arrival at Laxá around 10 AM. Birding around Mývatn. Further N to Húsavík. Birding around Húsavík. Driving back and west. Roadside birding at Hrutafjörður, Hvammsfjörður and Grunderfjörður. Past Stykkisholmur on Snæfellsnes. Night in car at Öndverðarnes, arrived around midnight.
- 29.5: Morning at Öndverðarnes and Svörtuloft breeding seabird colonies. Drive back east along the southern end of Snæfellsnes. Birding at Bredvik and a small forest plantation. Late afternoon at Seltjarnarnes. Evening at Garður, Gardskagi and Sandgerdi. Night in car close to Garður.
- 30.5: Early morning flight from Keflavik to Stockholm, Arlanda.

Internet Resources

Yann Kolbeinssons excellent web page: <https://notendur.hi.is/~yannk/index-eng.html>

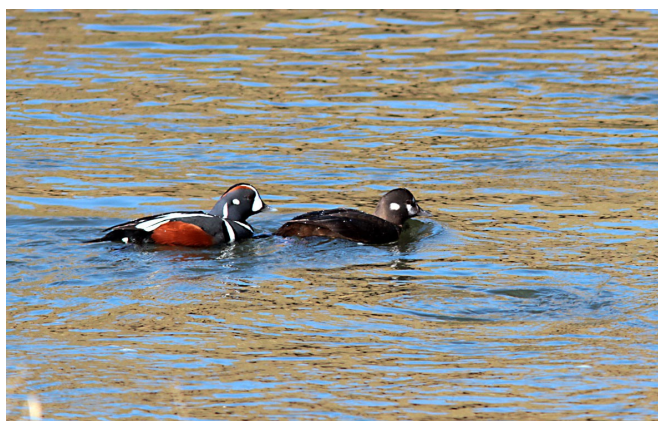
Rare news at Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/birdingiceland>



Firstly unaware of my presence this Arctic Fox, just about to loose its winter fur, walked just pass me at Öndverðarnes.



'Borealis'-Eider in a breeding colony south of Sandgerdi, note prominent forehead and yellow base to bill.



Splendid Harlequin Ducks at Laxá River, Mývatn.



'Queen' Eider (right) at Bredvik on S Snæfellsnes.

List of birds: Iceland, May 27th-30th 2012

Following IOC World Bird List 4.2 (April 2014) (www.worldbirdnames.org). In total: 73 species. Subspecies notations are foremost literature-based.

1. Rock Ptarmigan <i>Lagopus muta islandorum</i>	3 Mývatn, 1 E Stykkisholmur
2. Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	20+ Akureyri-Mývatn
3. Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	
4. Brant Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	1000+ migr N Öndvernarnes, 500+ E Stykkisholmur
5. Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	
6. Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	
7. Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	2 S Sandgerdi
8. Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	
9. Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	
10. Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchus</i>	
11. Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	1 pair Seltjarnarnes
12. Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	1 pair Mývatn
13. Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	
14. Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	
15. Greater Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	1 pair Seltjarnarnes, 40 Mývatn
16. King Eider <i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	2f Bredvík
17. Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima borealis</i>	
18. Harlequin Duck <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	8 Laxá, 3m + 2f N of Húsavík
19. Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	30 Mývatn
20. Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	
21. Barrow's Goldeneye <i>Bucephala islandica</i>	50+ Laxá-Mývatn
22. Common Merganser <i>Mergus merganser merganser</i>	2 pairs E Stykkisholmur
23. Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	
24. Red-throated Loon <i>Gavia stellata</i>	
25. Great Northern Loon <i>Gavia immer</i>	1 ad W Laxá, 3 ad Mývatn, 1 ad + 1 2cy migr N Öndverðarnes, 1 2cy Seltjarnarnes (29/5)
26. Northern Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis auduboni</i>	
27. Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	5 Gardskagi
28. Horned Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus auritus</i>	25 Mývatn
29. Northern Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>	
30. European Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis aristotelis</i>	e.g. 10 Öndvernarnes
31. Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo carbo</i>	e.g. 3 Gardskagi
32. White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	2 ad Hrutafjörður
33. Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus</i>	
34. European Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	
35. Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula psammotromus</i>	
36. Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago faeroeensis</i>	
37. Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>	
38. Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus islandicus</i>	
39. Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus robusta</i>	
40. Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres interpres</i>	
41. Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i>	
42. Sanderling <i>Calidris alba alba</i>	e.g. 500 Akureyri, 1000 Hrutafjörður, 200 Sandgerdi
43. Purple Sandpiper <i>Calidris maritima littoralis</i>	e.g. 100 Hvammsfjörður, 20 Hrutafjörður, 2 Akureyri
44. Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina schinzii/arctica</i>	
45. Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	500+ Mývatn
46. Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla tridactyla</i>	
47. Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	
48. Mew Gull <i>Larus canus canus</i>	
49. Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	
50. Glaucous Gull <i>Larus hyperboreus leucetetes</i>	e.g. 100+ Grunderfjörður
51. Iceland Gull <i>Larus glaucooides glaucooides</i>	10 Húsavík, 10+ Grunderfjörður, 1 Hrutafjörður, 2 Öndverðarnes
52. European Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus argenteus</i>	
53. Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>	

54. Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisica</i>	
55. Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	2 N Húsavík
56. Parasitic Jaeger <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	
57. Thick-billed Murre <i>Uria lomvia lomvia</i>	40+ Svörtuloft
58. Common Murre <i>Uria aalge aalge</i>	
59. Razorbill <i>Alca torda islandica</i>	
60. Black Guillemot <i>Cepphus grylle islandicus</i>	
61. Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica arctica</i>	
62. Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i> (domest)	
63. Northern Raven <i>Corvus corax varius</i>	
64. Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	1 Garður
65. Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	1 singing at a forest plantation S Snæfellsnes
66. Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	
67. Common Blackbird <i>Turdus merula merula</i>	
68. Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus coburni</i>	
69. Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa</i>	
70. Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	
71. Common Redpoll <i>Carduelis flammea rostrata</i>	1 Húsavík, 1 at a forest plantation S S-nes
72. Snow Bunting <i>Plectrophenax nivalis insulæ</i>	2 Svörtuloft, 1 S Garður
73. White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	



Feeding shorebirds dotted out in a bay at Akureyri.

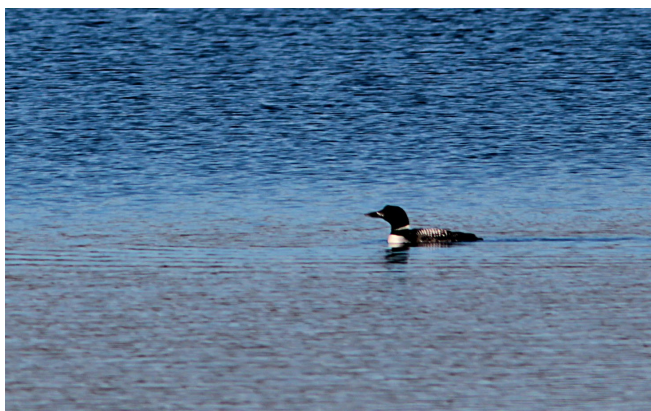
Comments on some birds NOT seen

<i>White-winged Scoter</i>	Missed one long-staying returning drake ssp. <i>deglandi</i> at Seltjarnarnes by 5 minutes, seen by a French birder.
<i>Gyr Falcon</i>	e.g. Mývatn.
<i>Winter Wren</i>	Endemic subspecies.

Additional shots



Adult Glaucous Gull, Snæfellsnes



Great Northern Loon, Mývatn



Iceland Gull probable 3cy (e.g. yellow iris), Húsavík



Barrow's Goldeneye, easy to spot at Laxá



Mývatn in a perfect setting. Warm, calm and sunny.