



Birding Locations in Northwest Iceland

The map shows locations from Hrútafjörður in the west to cape Pórðarhöfði in the east. The following text describes the locations and areas along the trail with reference to the map.

1. Borðeyri

To get to Borðeyri turn off road #1 on to road #68 and travel north for 9km.

This area receives the highest concentration of birds during migration in late April and early May when waders like Red Knots, Turnstones and Dunlin arrive at the seashore to feed before leaving for breeding grounds in Greenland and Canada. In June the bay fills up with Eider Ducks, Whooper Swans and some gulls.

2. Reykjavík / Reykjatangi

Reykjavík is located close to road #1. To get here, drive from the main road towards the large white building to the left by the sea housing the District museum (Byggðasafnið).

Waders gather along the coast feeding or roosting. Here you will also find Eider Ducks resting on the shoreline and a large Arctic Tern colony. An information sign about the birdlife is located by the museum. The museum displays interesting items from culture in the area. Amongst them being the shark ship Ófeigur.

3. Hvammstangi

From Reykjavík you continue east on road #1, turn off at road #72 (look out for the Seal Center sign) and travel 6km to Hvammstangi. At the shore to the west of the Icelandic Seal Center, by the harbour, waders such as Turnstones, Purple Sandpipers and Dunlin can be seen in the summer. All summer Eider ducks are present in the harbour, often with their chicks. Great Cormorant can be seen occasionally and, during winter, the White Tailed Eagle has been spotted flying over the fjord.

From Hvammstangi you can either drive directly through town to the Vatnsnes peninsula to go to Illugastaðir (4) or go back onto road #1 and continue east to Gauksmyri (5).

The Best Time to Visit

For those who are keen to see as many bird species as possible in Iceland, late May to June is the best time. By then the migrant species have arrived and are preparing their nests. With 24 hours of daylight, Iceland is teeming with bird activities which allows you to bird watch whenever you desire.

As most of the birds in Iceland are migrants they typically leave the island in August and September. The winter season lacks the same abundance of species as summer but still provides the Gyr Falcon, Merlin, White-tailed Eagle, Snowy Owl and Short-eared Owl, Rock Ptarmigan in shining white, Common Raven, Snow Bunting, Redpoll, gulls, ducks and a few others.

For best time to see certain species, we recommend www.eBird.org, go to Explore Data - Bar Chart - Iceland.

Birding in the Northwest

The Northwest region of Iceland offers extended wetlands with an abundance of Whooper Swan, Great Northern Diver, ducks such as Long-tailed Duck, waders, and geese. The area has accessible wetlands that offer the ideal habitat for many species of marshland birds and waders. Eider ducks in large colonies, Arctic Tern, Atlantic Puffin, Kittiwake and many other species live close to the ocean.

Almost everywhere it should be easy to see and listen to birds such as the Red-necked Phalarope, Golden Plover or Snipe.

Of all the bird species that visit Iceland, only a few can not be seen in the Northwest during nesting or migration periods. This map highlights birding locations and areas which are accessible for most bird enthusiasts travelling on their own. For more remote places we recommend tour operators operating both locally and across Iceland. For recommendations please go to our webpage.

Please notice that a map for the Birding Trail of Northeast Iceland, from Akureyri to Langanes peninsula, is also available. For more information visit www.birdingtrail.is

Protection of Wildlife

Almost all birds in Iceland are floor breeders. Therefore, we recommend care be taken to avoid disturbing their nests and eggs when hiking in nature.

We recommend two websites with good information on the protection of birdlife in Iceland.

www.fuglaventur.is/english and www.thewildnorth.org

Information

For further information on North West Iceland go to:

www.visitnwiceland.is
www.visitkagafjordur.is

Information centers in the area:

The Icelandic Seal Center, Hvammstangi - Tel: 451 2345

Glaðheimar, Blönduós - Tel: 452 4520

Varmahlíð, Skagafjörður - Tel: 455 6161

Tourist Information Center, Blönduós - Tel: 452 4848

Puffin and Friends, Sauðárkrúkur - Tel: 892 7707

Slavonian Grebe - *Podiceps auritus*

Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*

Common Eider, *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Great Northern Diver, *Gavia immer*

Red-throated Diver, *Gavia stellata*

Savonan Grebe, *Podiceps auritus*

Northern Fulmar, *Fulmarus glacialis*

Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Whooper Swan, *Cygnus cygnus*

Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*

Pink-footed Goose, *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*

European Wigeon, *Anas penelope*

Gadwall, *Anas strepera*

Tufted Duck, *Aythya fuligula*

Greater Scaup, *Aythya marila*

Eurasian Teal, *Anas crecca*

Barrow's Goldeneye, *Bucephala islandica*

Harlequin Duck, *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Common Scoter, *Melanitta nigra*

Long-tailed Duck, *Clangula hyemalis*

Red-breasted Merganser, *Mergus serrator*

Rock Pigeon, *Columba livia*

Ring-necked Pheasant, *Phasianus colchicus*

Golden Plover, *Pluvialis apricaria*

Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*

Sanderling, *Calidris alba*

Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*

Purple Sandpiper, *Calidris maritima*

Black-tailed Godwit, *Limosa limosa*

Redshank, *Tringa totanus*

Eurasian Oystercatcher, *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*

Arctic Skua, *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*

Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus*

Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*

Iceland Gull, *Larus glaucoides*

Glaucous Gull, *Larus hyperboreus*

Common Gull, *Larus canus*

Black-headed Gull, *Larus ridibundus*

Black-legged Kittiwake, *Rissa tridactyla*

Common Guillemot, *Uria lomvia*

Razorbill, *Alca torda*

Atlantic Puffin, *Fratercula arctica*

Black Guillemot, *Cephaloscyphus grylle*

Redwing, *Turdus iliacus*

Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*

Winter Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Goldcrest, *Regulus regulus*

Northern Wheatear, *Oenanthe oenanthe*

White wagtail, *Motacilla alba*

Meadow Pipit, *Anthus pratensis*

Common Merganser, *Mergus merganser*

Common Raven, *Corvus corax*



14. Hólar

Hólar is located in Hjaltadalur valley (take road #767 or #769, off road #76). This is an interesting site for bird watchers as it provides the opportunity to see ducks at the old fishery pond, such as Barrow's Goldeneye and Tufted Duck, as well as passerines and woodland birds in the vast area of woodland around the area. Signs at Hólar University College provide information about walking trails in the area and further information can be obtained from the Tourism Services here. Passerines not usually found in other places in our Birding Trail such as Wren, Goldcrest and Redpoll can be seen. Many waders breed around Hólar and moorland birds such as Ptarmigan are in abundance here at Hólar.

15. Kolkuós – Elínarhlómi

Kolkuós is located on the east side of Skagafjörður at the estuary of the Kolbeinstaðá river. Diverse birdlife can be seen in the area all year around, particularly in Elínarhlómi which is a islet just off the coast. There is a Eider nesting colony at Elínarhlómi and Black Guillemot nest in the rocks at the base of the islet. Inside the estuary, where the river is quite wide and has formed islets and gravel ridges, Arctic Tern, Harlequin and Eider Duck, and Red-necked Phalarope can be seen. In the spring Turnstone, Dunlin and Ringed Plover frequent the beach while Barnacle Goose, Greylag Goose, Long-tailed Ducks, Whooper Swans and Arctic Terns stay at the river banks.

16. Höfðavatn – Pórðarhöfði

From a distance Pórðarhöfði cape looks like an island but it is, in fact, connected to the mainland via two gravel ridges. Between these ridges is a brackish lake which is also the largest lake in Skagafjörður, approximately 10 km² in size. Höfðavatn is home to diverse birdlife, mostly ducks. In late July, when ducks start to moult, they gather on Höfðavatn in large groups all over the lake. The birdlife at Pórðarhöfði cape consists of landbirds and waders. By the Lómajón pond, east of lake Höfðavatn, Black-headed Gull breed as well as some species of ducks, Arctic Tern and Horned Grebe. A telescope is recommended for bird watching at Lómajón.

17. Fljótaá

Driving road 76 towards Siglufjörður you cross the river Fljótaá, about 800 meters further east turn right at a T junction onto road #62, drive for about 1 km on a gravel road until you see a sign saying Fljótaá beat 4. This track will take you to the river itself. This area is rich in waterfowl and waders such as Eurasian Wigeons, Eurasian Teal, Mallard, Red-breasted Merganser, Tufted Ducks, Greylag Geese, Black-tailed Godwits, Red-necked Phalaropes, Redshanks and Common Snipes to name a few of the breeding species. Further inland on the river are breeding Harlequin Ducks and colonies of Arctic Terns and Black-headed and Common Gulls. Goosanders overwinter on the river and can be seen until early spring.

12. Garðsvatn/Keldudalur

To get to Garðsvatn/Keldudalur turn off road #75 onto road #764, a U-shaped road which ends on road #75 just a few km east from where you drove off it.

After driving approx.

11 km on the gravel road you come to Keldudalur. There you can find a bird information sign and rich birdlife. About 10 km further you will find Garðsvatn, a sandy bottom lake in the region of Austari Héraðsvatn. An information sign about birdlife at Garðsvatn has been placed at its northern end, which also has a spectacular view over the lake. The area is one of the most species rich areas in Iceland. Many duck and wader species nest here including, for example, Greylag Goose, Tufted Duck, Common Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Red-breasted Merganser, Horned Grebe and Red-necked Phalarope. It is helpful to have a telescope, though binoculars should be sufficient to view the exciting birdlife in this area. A second information sign is located west of the lake. Note that you can go directly to Garðsvatn and skip Keldudalur by not taking the first turn onto road #764 and taking the second turn instead, and then go back the same way you came from, towards #75, after your visit.

13. Ásholt – Ás - Hjaltaldalsá

Travelling along the road beside the river Hjaltaldalsá in Hjaltadalur

Skagafjörður (road #767, off road #76), you can see a variety of birds.

Waders breed along

or by the river and the diversity of species is

extremely high. This is an excellent location to see Harlequin Ducks.

Location	Great Northern Diver, *Gavia immer*	Red-throated Diver, *Gavia stellata*	Savonan Grebe, *Podiceps auritus*	Northern Fulmar, *Fulmarus glacialis*	Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*	Whooper Swan, *Cygnus cygnus*	Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*	Pink-footed Goose, *Anser brachyrhynchus*	Barnacle Goose, *Branta leucocephala*	Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*	European Wigeon, *Anas penelope*	Gadwall, *Anas strepera*	Tufted Duck, *Aythya fuligula*	Greater Scaup, *Aythya marila*	Eurasian Teal, *Anas crecca*	Barrow's Goldeneye, *Bucephala islandica*	Harlequin Duck, *Histrionicus histrionicus*	Common Scoter, *Melanitta nigra*	Long-tailed Duck, *Clangula hyemalis*	Red-breasted Merganser, *Mergus serrator*	Rock Pigeon, *Columba livia*	Ring-necked Pheasant, *Phasianus colchicus*	Golden Plover, *Pluvialis apricaria*	Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*	Sanderling, *Calidris alba*	Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*	Purple Sandpiper, *Calidris maritima*	Black-tailed Godwit, *Limosa limosa*	Redshank, *Tringa totanus*	Eurasian Oystercatcher, *Haematopus ostralegus*	Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*	Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*	Arctic Skua, *Stercorarius parasiticus*	Common Guillemot, *Uria lomvia*	Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*	Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus*	Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*