

**CRUISES FOR NATURE**  
**CRUISE ON *THE EXPLORER***  
*Norway – Escorted Wildlife & Photography Tour*  
*Spitsbergen - The Svalbard Archipelago*

**08 – 19 July 2007**



**Leader: Simon Boyes**

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**A Personal Diary**

**Sunday, 8 July**

We all meet up at Heathrow Terminal 3 for the late afternoon SAS flight (lasting almost two hours) to a rainy Oslo. Our onward flight to the high Arctic is almost on time. The midnight sun appears surprisingly high above the horizon. It takes two and three quarter hours in the air to reach Longyearbyen. We realize how distant Svalbard is, only 600 miles south of the North Pole. Spitsbergen is the main island in the Svalbard Archipelago, lying between 74° and 81° north. Only the northern tip of Greenland, Ellesmere Island, and some Russian islands are so far north.

**Monday, 9 July**

The flight lands just after 0100, after beautiful views of the snowy mountains round the fjord where Longyearbyen is. We have a coach to meet us; and rooms are ready for us at the comfortable Radisson SAS Hotel, where we try to sleep with sun streaming through the curtains.

Two wild Reindeer, of the short-legged Svalbard subspecies, graze outside the hotel as we get up. After a late and leisurely buffet breakfast, we assemble outside the hotel, and watch the distant Little Auks whirring in flocks above the crags where they nest. Snow Buntings feed young on the grassy slopes by the road. Purple and White Saxifrages are in flower, as are patches of White Mountain Avens, *Dryas octopetala*. As we walk towards the airport lake, we pass Common Eiders along the fjord, and a few Arctic Terns and Black Guillemots. The pool has a Ringed Plover among the more abundant Purple Sandpipers, and flocks of bathing Black-legged Kittiwakes. Two Arctic Skuas fly past - they nest here in small numbers, and provide frequent harassment for the terns. Leo spots an Arctic Fox ambling along the shore. Most of us save the long walk back by hailing taxis from the airport.

The afternoon walk is up the valley away from the fjord, amid a landscape dominated by old coalmines. We fail to find any Ptarmigan, but enjoy two families of Barnacle Geese with young, white goslings. In the scope we watch perched Little Auks on a distant pinnacle. All day we have clear skies, bright sun and crisp air.

**Tuesday, 10 July**

After a fine smorgasbord breakfast, we walk along the road to the east of town, which enters wild habitat immediately. On our left is mudflat and fjord, on our right a marshy area with hills rising steeply behind. Common Eiders are not alone among the duck, as there is a pair of Long-tailed Duck too, which rest by the wetland and dive among the newly hatched Common Eider chicks. Waders include Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Ringed Plover, but suddenly we have a surprise: among them is a beautiful male Grey Phalarope, in brick-red breeding plumage. It makes a few short flights, but settles often enough for excellent scope views. This is one of the Svalbard specials we have all been hoping for. As we head back to town, we are dive-bombed by Arctic Terns that nest alongside the road.

Many of the group wander into town for lunch, while others visit the excellent museum. At three o'clock our luggage is taken to the ship by van; and coaches come for us at four.

Soon we are stepping aboard our new floating home (for the next nine nights). *MV Explorer* was the world's first purpose-built expedition cruising ship, built in 1969 for Arctic and Antarctic discovery. She looks wonderful after a major refurbishment in 2004. There is time to find our cabins and unpack a little before an

introductory briefing in the forward lounge and a mandatory safety drill in the lecture hall. The fine four-course meal promises to be the first of many.

All day has been cloudless again, and as we steam west along Isfjorden we pass through the inshore zone of Arctic Tern and Black Guillemot, into deeper waters. Here rafts and flying flocks of Little Auks become common. Often skeins of Brünnich's Guillemots join them; many close enough to see the white gape-line. As we emerge into open sea, we head south. Northern Fulmars, mostly darker than British birds, accompany us over the millpond ocean. As I write this at midnight, the sea and sky remain blue, with sunlight glinting on the auks that pass my porthole.

### **Wednesday, 11 July**

Early fog clears during the zodiac briefing after breakfast, leaving a beautiful morning to explore Burgerbukta, in the Hornsund area of south-west Spitsbergen. Our first outing is a zodiac cruise, with no planned landing. The sea is full of icebergs, growlers and bergy bits, all carved from the snout of a huge glacier. In the bright sun, conditions are superb for photography, with the deep blues of the compressed ice especially attractive. Black Guillemots are a common sight on the water, and Black-legged Kittiwakes rest on bergs and call their names as they fly over. Two lucky zodiacs have an Ivory Gull fly overhead, its wings appearing translucent. Bearded Seals surface to inspect us, showing off the long whiskers that give them their misleading name. Others are hauled out on flat bergs, appearing long-bodied and small-headed. The climax of the cruise is a thunderous roar as a huge section of ice comes tumbling into the water from the glacier. The Safety Officer's zodiac seems especially close to the event, but his passengers report that the tsunami soon dies away.

During the buffet lunch, the ship repositions to Gashamna, on the south shore of Hornsund. This is primarily a historic site, where a Russian expedition wintered, working on latitude and longitude calculations a century ago. There is also evidence of former whaling activity: Dave the marine mammal lecturer tells us the skulls belonged to the Bowhead, a species now long since hunted out from Svalbard waters. Atlantic Puffins are plentiful in the bay, here close to the northern end of their range. Squadrons of Common Eiders fly past too: dark brown ducks and smart, pied drakes. On land nesting Arctic Terns keep an uneasy peace with nesting Arctic Skuas - their battles are mostly fought over food, over the sea. There are at least five pairs of skuas; with only one individual of the dark morph. Black-legged Kittiwakes carry bill-fuls of moss to a distant nesting colony, beyond our sight. Three Reindeer run through the skua territories without provoking aerial attack. The tundra is easy to walk on, with both purple and white saxifrage in bloom, as well as cushions of moss campion, and a small forest of tiny willows (*Salix reticulata*). After a good wander around, imagining living conditions for the Russians in this remote spot, we head back to the warmth of the mothership.

After dinner, we catch up on two days' checklists in the lecture hall. Nigel and I have a brief view of a Fin Whale, which passes the lecture room windows, with a rolling back and a few blows.

### **Thursday, 12 July**

Heading north past the mouth of Isfjorden where we started the cruise, we enter the next fjord to the north, St. Jonsfjorden. After breakfast we are ready for a walk on the tundra, where we can add delicate blooms of *Draba* (a yellow whitlow-grass) and *Cerastium* (Arctic Mouse-ear) to our botanical list. Most of us opt for the long walk, up a hillside to a viewpoint over a huge glacier. Reindeer graze the mossy tundra: three stags, and mother and calf. Little Auks fly above us to nests hidden on the towering crags above. A typical wader trill alerts us to nesting Purple Sandpipers, including one parent with three tiny chicks. They are negotiating the terrain with ease, although they still resemble balls of tundra-coloured cotton wool, and finding plenty of minuscule insect-life to feed on too.

Shortly afterwards, a pair of Ptarmigan appear ahead of us, and allow us long scope views. The male is off-white – their summer plumage up here. The female is brown and finely barred. The panorama below us includes two Bearded Seals hauled out on small ice floes.

During lunch we move to Poolepynten, across the strait on Prince Karl's Foreland. Here, against a magnificent backdrop of snowy peaks, huge male Walrus are loafing on the beach, visible at a great distance. Many are upside down, tusks in the air. More appear in the water alongside the ship. Zodiacs are launched, and we land on a sandy beach, covered in Siberian driftwood. The passengers are split into three groups for a close encounter with these strange marine giants. While we wait our turn, two Red-throated Divers fly over calling, and we see distance flocks of Barnacle Geese (with goslings) through a surprisingly hazy heat-shimmer. Purple Sandpipers feed close to us, including two with colour rings.

The Walrus are a wonderful sight, both the landlubbers and a group in the shallows. We have perfect light on their huge brown forms, as they scratch and grunt and occasionally rear up in half-hearted play-fights. Offshore another huge male appears, and then rolls up the beach in a series of gigantic gyrations to join its malodorous companions. Watching the scene are a pair of sleepy Iceland Gulls, non-breeding visitors here, and uncommon in summer. They have wings significantly longer than tail, and are less massive than an adult Glaucous that passes by. Also new are a Great Black-backed Gull, pursued by vicious terns, and a pair of Great Skuas. We return to the ship elated and rather sunburnt.

### **Friday, 13 July**

After another sunny start, we have more overcast skies for our morning walk on Amsterdamoya, a small island in the north west corner of Spitsbergen. This was the centre of Dutch whaling operations in the 16th century, when the bay must have been filled with sailing ships, and the sea red with whale blood. Now all that remains is a small cemetery and a few foundations by the landing beach.

Small pools behind the beach look promising but deliver only one Red-throated Diver, which drops in for a few minutes before continuing its hunch-backed flight. A pair of Ruddy Turnstones holds territory on the tundra, chasing off an Arctic Skua. Leo points out an elegant Long-tailed Skua, with white, unbanded breast, among the Arctics. Wally and two of the lecturers spot a pair of vagrant Whimbrel flying past.

Continuing over the tundra in a circle, we see huge Polar Bear prints in the ground. As we approach the ship, an unfortunate Black-legged Kittiwake is forced to disgorge four semi-digested fish by an acrobatic multi-skua attack: two are Arctics and the other a Long-tail. Meanwhile, officers from the bridge see a distant Polar Bear on a different island, but it quickly disappears.

After lunch we anchor off Fuglesongen, a small island whose name means bird-song. The song is provided by a large colony of Little Auks, which is our destination. The landing is rockier than most, but soon we are safely ashore, crossing a short stretch of rock-strewn tundra to the foot of the colony. Here we sit, and let the birds come to us. After a while, flocks of Little Auks settle on the rocks around us, allowing lovely photo opportunities for those with telephoto lenses. They have young chicks (one egg only is laid) underground in crevices between the huge boulders. Scientific studies on their nests can be made these days using fibre-optic cameras. Their laughing trills ring out on all sides, except when a Glaucous Gull flies over, when the whole colony departs in silence, wheeling around like a flock of starlings. Occasionally we look around elsewhere, at Reindeer stags crossing the steep mountainside above the colony, or at the Bearded Seal in the sea below.

A Norwegian ship passes by, and pauses by the next island for half an hour. On noticing that all passengers are out on the bows, we become suspicious: could there be a Bear? We reposition for a few minutes until we can see a mother and cub, only five months old, resting near the summit of the island. We spend an hour here, ensuring that all passengers have a great view of them, especially through the scopes. In the same spot is a pair of Great Skuas, displaying on a nearby ice-floe, and Atlantic Puffins frequently flying past. But our gaze returns again to the Polar Bears, which will have swum out to the island for safety against potentially threatening male bears.

Thrilled with the evening, we enjoy dinner all the more. Distant Minke Whales and one Humpback appear on the starboard side as we enjoy another sunny evening on deck. Just before midnight, a quiet call on the p.a. system alerts passengers to two Fin Whales, which stay close to the ship for more than ten minutes.

## **Saturday, 14 July**

A winter wonderland in mid-summer greets us as we wake up: sea-ice on all sides of the ship under a cloudless sky. Two Ivory Gulls fly round and land on the ice before breakfast. This is the Hinlopen Strait, between Spitsbergen and Nordaustlandet, the second largest island of Svalbard. A walk on the tundra at Torellneset has lovely blooms of Svalbard poppy and purple saxifrage, but is quiet for birds. A Purple Sandpiper feeds on the shore by the landing, and a single Ivory Gull flies over.

We are taken by zodiac to admire four huge male Walrus hauled out on an ice-floe. They are more somnolent than Thursday's ones, only occasionally shaking a flipper. However, they look more picturesque on ice, especially under blue skies. On the way back to the ship, we pass a flock of moulting Pink-footed Geese on the shore.

After lunch, we head back north, up the ice-choked Hinlopen Strait, an experience of great beauty. Bearded Seals lie out on bergs, and a warm sun seems incongruous at such high latitude. Our destination is Alkefjellet (Auk Mountain), a sea-bird cliff that makes a magnificent place for a zodiac cruise. Here nest 50,000 pairs of Brünnich's Guillemots, on a cliff of limestone with a wide horizontal dolorite intrusion. The auks choose the dolorite ledges for their nests, squashing up on narrow ledges. They will still be incubating a single pear-shaped egg. The shape is designed to prevent rolling off and providing a meal for a Glaucous Gull or Arctic Fox. The sky is filled with swarms of auks, milling round like giant midges in a Scottish summer. Black Guillemots nest here too, in small numbers on ledges or under boulders on the lower slopes. The chorus of low-pitched auks mixes with the high screams of the Black-legged Kittiwakes calling their names. Returning to the ship, we stop to photograph guillemots perched penguin-like on ice-floes.

Heading north, we enjoy dinner and Fin Whales regularly sighted. An evening's entertainment is provided in the form of 'Call my Arctic Bluff', in which heavily disguised lecturers with outrageous wigs tell lie after lie in a series of tests for us: which is telling the truth? By the end, we know what a bog chisel and a sassat are, and how to degomble! Will we ever be able to believe the lecturers again?

At midnight, we are steaming north under clear skies to our furthest north point, west of the Sjuoyane (Seven Islands).

## **Sunday, 15 July**

At 0300, a quiet announcement reveals that the ship is surrounded by pack ice at 81° 32' North - our closest point to the North Pole (only 560 nautical miles). Many passengers head out onto the decks to view the ice stretching in all directions, and to see an Ivory Gull fly over.

After breakfast, a plunge (diving from ice-floe, into Arctic Ocean) is offered to any passenger crazy enough to try out the 2°C water temperature! Luckily the continuing sunshine and lack of wind make the adventure bearable. The sauna is a great place to warm up afterwards.

We head south, changing plans in the true spirit of expedition cruising. The Captain had hoped to explore the Seven Islands, Svalbard's most northern islets, but too much ice is between them and us. (Last week, the area was free of ice). Instead, we make a landing at Mosselbukta, back on the north coast of the Spitsbergen mainland. The tundra is the most varied we have seen, with rocky outcrops, pools, lakes and a river. Mike puts us onto an Arctic Fox cub just ahead of us, the first of the trip. It seems too young to be out on its own. Many Reindeer are peacefully grazing the tundra, including two calves and an almost white adult, which gives the staff a momentary fright. Appearing in the distance, it might have been a Polar Bear!

Birds include Purple Sandpipers nesting, a few Snow Buntings, an Arctic Skua, aggressive Arctic Terns, Common Eiders on the pools, and another fly-by Ivory Gull. More spectacular coastal mountain scenery rolls past the dining room windows as we make for the Andoyane (Duck Islands in Norwegian).

## **Monday, 16 July**

The day begins with a rousing chorus of Happy Birthday to Joan at breakfast. Meanwhile, most of the zodiacs are in the water, scouting for bears around the islands. Last week's cruise had success here. Brad,

the expedition leader, soon announces that one has been sighted and all the zodiacs are ready for us. After a rapid crossing, we are quickly in position, watching a magnificent male Polar Bear feeding on the carcass of a Ringed Seal just above the beach, 50 metres from us. The morning sunlight is behind us, and the bear considerably faces us throughout the 40 minutes we spend watching. Between mouthfuls it frequently stops to lick its front paws, often being dive-bombed by Arctic Terns. All passengers must have brilliant photos! Easily distracted, the birders among us notice a Grey Phalarope flying by.

There is plenty of time to cruise round the other islands in the zodiacs. A pair of Long-tailed Duck are in superb plumage on the shore; above them are a flightless flock of Pinkfeet, perhaps 80 all crowded together. They seem very aware of their vulnerability. A shout over the radios alerts us to King Eiders among Common Eiders - we make haste and find four of these beautiful duck resting by a stream. Two are drakes - the real 'Kings,' with one queen and a very dark prince. Earlier zodiacs arriving here had a close Grey Phalarope too, swimming in the shallows.

Back on board for lunch, there is more sense of excitement than usual! The short voyage to the end of Liefdefjorden, where the giant Monaco Glacier calves into the sea, is finer scenically than one could imagine. Our second zodiac cruise of the day is along the snout of the glacier, where hundreds of gulls are feeding on nutrients stirred up immediately below it. Most are Black-legged Kittiwakes, but many are Glaucous, and there are a few Ivory Gulls. They rarely perch, but treat us to fine flight views and photo opportunities. Less expected is a pod of Belugas, the small white whales that live a gregarious Arctic existence in these cold waters. They are close enough to hear regular intakes of breath and one grunting vocalization too. The rosy glow on passengers' faces is part sunshine, part thrill at the day's wildlife.

The Captain's drinks party is followed by a special dinner, then a little improvised piano music from a talented Dutch passenger. Just before midnight, thousands of Little Auks are glinting in the sun as they fly low over the sea all around the ship. We must be close to Fuglesongen.

## **Tuesday, 17 July**

At breakfast we are anchored off Ny Alesund, a small town and scientific research centre that began life as a mining community. The 'city tour' is for this afternoon: the morning is exploration of an area of tundra nearby, Blomstrandhamna (also called Ny London). Here the tundra flora is magnificent, and three significant birds are nesting immediately around the landing beach. Three Ptarmigan are approachable to within a few metres, including a cryptically camouflaged female on a nest. A Long-tailed Skua is a surprising find, guarding a half-grown chick. Within a few metres a female Long-tailed Duck is incubating too, no doubt benefiting from the skua's protection. These two have chosen for their nest-sites the foundations of demolished buildings associated with an old marble mine.

Those who take the long hike have few opportunities to stop for birds. However, there is an incubating Arctic Skua, and a Red-throated Diver on a small lake, which also has a brood of recently hatched Long-tailed Ducklings with their solicitous mother. A Reindeer stag comes close for full-frame photos. The views over Kongsfjorden, with fine z-shaped glaciers sweeping down to the sea, are again enhanced by cloudless skies. The walkers have too many layers on, and almost suffer from hyperthermia!

During lunch we cross the fjord, and tie up alongside the pier at Ny Alesund. A dry landing! The afternoon is for wandering round the settlement, where eight nations have research projects in progress, including climate, weather and biology studies. In addition to shop and museum, historian Damien shows the passengers the mast from which Amundsen set off for the North Pole by air twice: unsuccessfully in 1925, but successfully the next year.

Wildlife is here too: Arctic Terns feed two chicks a few days old, and by the first lake Purple Sandpipers have a brood of three strong, independent youngsters. Rosemary puts us onto an Ivory Gull flying high over the town. The highlight is the family of Arctic Foxes denning under one of the huts. The vixen has five cubs, which all emerge to play and sun themselves in late afternoon. When most passengers have returned to the ship, the vixen launches a daring raid on the families of Barnacle Geese feeding by the lake. She can

easily outrun the goslings, and quickly returns with dinner in her mouth. She drops the limp gosling at the feet of the cubs, which take it into the den.

After a wonderful day of wildlife, we steam south towards Isfjorden, after a detour along the front of another stupendous glacier. After dinner, Dave and Sarah host an Arctic quiz, won convincingly by our team of Brenda, Peter, Ann, Bill and Connie. They enjoy the bottle of champagne that is the prize.

### **Wednesday, 18 July**

The morning landing is at Alkhorner, a bird-cliff and tundra site near the mouth of Isfjorden. A few Atlantic Puffins fly over the anchorage. Once ashore, the vast cliffs above are teeming with Brunnich's Guillemots and Black-legged Kittiwakes: a great place to look for Arctic Fox. As we walk across the spongy tundra, we admire the yellow Svalbard buttercups and blooms of hairy lousewort. Many Reindeer are approachable, but occasionally get into trouble with the nesting skuas. Barnacle Geese and Glaucous Gulls have half-grown young; but the two hyperactive Arctic Foxes chasing Snow Buntings make the most exciting viewing.

During lunch we reposition the ship to a bay called Skansbukta, a little to the north-east of Longyearbyen in Isfjorden. Here, on the site of an old gypsum mine, we explore for the last time. The flora includes some surprisingly large blue Jacob's ladders, and a rare Polar cress. Centuries of Fulmar guano have enriched the site, since here we have our first large Northern Fulmar colony: hundreds of pairs on high ledges. The best birds are to be found on the zodiac cruise, which passes under cliffs with four alcid species nesting. Black Guillemots nest on open ledges: in Britain their nests are usually hidden. Puffins and Little Auks also nest in cracks and crevices in the sheer cliff faces. Further up, Brunnich's Guillemots share the higher cliffs with Black-legged Kittiwakes, as at Alkhorner.

We spend our last night of daylight at anchor at Skansbukta, and reflect on a very successful cruise, with 11 landings and four zodiac cruises.

### **Thursday, 19 July**

We tie up alongside the jetty in Longyearbyen at breakfast, and disembark. A coach takes us to the Radisson SAS Hotel, where we can store our luggage safely for the morning. Many of the group visit the shops, but 11 of us repeat the Husky kennels road that we walked nine days ago. The Arctic Terns are more aggressive than last week, as hatching approaches. Wally is accurately anointed on the forehead - not a drop of guano on the parka! Leo spots a tern at a critical stage of its nesting: it has two day-old chicks and one egg pipping.

Beyond the kennels are Dunlin, Ringed Plovers, Long-tailed Duck, a few Pinkfeet and over a hundred Barnacles, a flock without chicks. These will be first-year non-breeders and failed breeders. We relocate the male Grey Phalarope, which is beginning to moult out of its brightest plumage. Best of all, two fully-grown chicks are swimming and feeding only 20 metres from us. They also potter along the muddy margin like crakes. Leo reckons that last week he saw the male's distraction display: a moment of wing-dragging designed to steer predators away from hidden chicks. In phalaropes, the male attends to all nesting duties; once his mate has laid eggs, she flies off to moult.

The coach takes us back to the airport for the long journey home. All our flights are on time. Our first stop is at Tromsø, where we have to disembark for another security check. (This is because passengers ending their journey in Oslo have to clear customs. Svalbard is a duty-free zone, and this sector is therefore considered international). Tromsø looks very beautiful from the air, in a fine coastal setting with birch trees and flowering willow herb. It looks almost tropical after Svalbard, but we are still north of the Arctic Circle.

There are Common Gulls at Tromsø and House Martins at Oslo Airport. We land at Heathrow at 2130, and gather at the carousel to collect luggage and say our farewells. Lucky ones can sleep in their own beds tonight; others disperse to local hotels.

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to the officers, crew and staff aboard the *Explorer*, who looked after us brilliantly in various ways. Most of all, a big thank-you to all of you for participating in the cruise with enthusiasm. Additional thanks to Nigel McCall for the photographs that adorn this report, and to Brenda Wilson for providing the flower list.

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August 2007

## Itinerary and Weather

Wherever possible, **shade** temperatures at dawn and midday are given.

- 9 July Arrive Longyearbyen 0110. Local walks.  
Sunny, 6-8°C (43-46°F)
- 10 July Longyearbyen: walk to husky kennels. Embark Explorer 1600. Isfjorden, south towards Hornsund.  
Sunny, 6-10°C (43-50°F)
- 11 July Hornsund: Burgerbukta and Gashamna.  
Early fog. Sunny a.m, cloudy p.m, 2-6°C (36-43°F)
- 12 July St. John's Fjorden, and Poolepynten (on Prince Karl's Foreland).  
Cloudy a.m, sunny p.m, 6°C (43°F)
- 13 July Amsterdamoya and Fuglesongen.  
Mostly cloudy, calm, 4-6°C (39-43°F)
- 14 July Hinlopen Strait: Torellneset and Alkefjellet.  
Sunny, 3-5°C (38-41°F)
- 15 July Furthest point north (81° 32' North). Mosselbukta.  
Sunny, 3-7°C (38-44°F)
- 16 July Andoyane Islands. Monaco Glacier in Liefdefjorden.  
Sunny, 4-6°C (39-43°F)
- 17 July Kongsfjorden: Blomstrandhamna (or Ny London). Ny Alesund.  
Sunny, 6-9°C (43-48°F)
- 18 July Isfjorden: Alkhornet and Skansbukta.  
Cloudy, 6-7°C (43-44°F)
- 19 July Longyearbyen. Disembark 0900. Husky kennels walk. Depart by air 1500.  
Cloudy, 5°C (41°F)

## CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

No of days recorded	Abundance Scale (max. seen on 1 day)	
1 2h means seen on 1 day and heard on 2 other days	1 =	1 - 4 individuals
	2 =	5 - 9
	3 =	10 - 99
	4 =	100 - 999
	5 =	1,000 - 9,999
	6 =	10,000 - 99,999

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Red-throated Diver	5	1	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
Northern Fulmar	10	4	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
Pink-footed Goose	4	3	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>
Barnacle Goose	7	4	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
Common Eider	11	3	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
King Eider	1	1	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>
Long-tailed Duck	5	3	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
Ptarmigan	2	1	<i>Lagopus mutus</i>
Common Ringed Plover	5	1	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Purple Sandpiper	10	3	<i>Calidris maritima</i>
Dunlin	3	2	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Whimbrel	1	1	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	1	1	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Grey (Red) Phalarope	3	1	<i>Phalaropus fulicaria</i>
Great Skua	4	1	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>
Arctic Skua	10	3	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Long-tailed Skua	2	1	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>
Great Black-backed Gull	1	1	<i>Larus marinus</i>
Glaucous Gull	11	3	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
Iceland Gull	1	1	<i>Larus glaucoides</i>
Ivory Gull	5	2	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>
Black-legged Kittiwake	11	4	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Arctic Tern	11	3	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Brünnich's Guillemot	10	6	<i>Uria lomvia</i>
Black Guillemot	11	3	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>
Little Auk	11	5	<i>Alle alle</i>
Atlantic Puffin	9	3	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>
Snow Bunting	10	3	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>
 <b>MAMMALS</b>			
Arctic Fox	4	2	<i>Alopex lagopus</i>
Polar Bear	2	1	<i>Ursus maritimus</i>
Walrus	2	3	<i>Odobenus rosmarus</i>
Ringed Seal	1	1	<i>Phoca hispida</i>
Bearded Seal	8	2	<i>Erignathus barbatus</i>
Beluga	1	2	<i>Delphinapterus leucas</i>
Minke Whale	1	1	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>
Fin Whale	4	1	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>
Humpback Whale	1	1	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
Svalbard Reindeer	5	2	<i>Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus</i>

## FLOWERS OF SVALBARD, seen on this tour

Polar Willow	<i>Salix polaris</i>
Net-leaved Willow	<i>Salix reticulata</i>
Mountain Sorrel	<i>Oxyria digyna</i>
Knotweed	<i>Polygonum viviparum</i>
Alpine Sandwort	<i>Minuartia rubella</i>
Fringed Sandwort	<i>Arenaria pseudofrigida</i>
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria crassipes</i>
Arctic Chickweed	<i>Stellaria humifusa</i>
Arctic Mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium arcticum</i>
Nodding Lychnis	<i>Silene uralensis</i>
Arctic White Campion	<i>Silene furcata</i>
Moss Campion	<i>Silene acaulis</i>
Snow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus nivalis</i>
Pygmy Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus pygmaeus</i>
Svalbard Poppy (national flower)	<i>Papaver dahlianum</i>
Polar Cress	<i>Cardamine nymanii</i>
Polar Scurvy Grass	<i>Cochlearia groenlandica</i>
Common Scurvy Grass	<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>
Yellow Arctic Whitlow-Grass	<i>Draba bellii</i>
Lapland Whitlow-Grass	<i>Draba lactea</i>
Purple Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga oppositifolia</i>
Hawkweed-leaved Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga hieracifolia</i>
Alpine Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga nivalis</i>
Yellow Mountain Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga aizoides</i>
Bog Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>
Drooping Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga cernua</i>
Brook Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga rivularis</i>
Tufted Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga cespitosa</i>
Arctic Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla hyperarctica</i>
Mountain Avens	<i>Dryas octopetala</i>
Arctic Bell-Heather	<i>Cassiope tetragona</i>
Boreal Jacob's-ladder	<i>Polemonium boreale</i>
Oysterleaf	<i>Mertensia maritima</i>
Hairy Lousewort	<i>Pedicularis hirsuta</i>
Black Fleabane	<i>Erigeron humilis</i>
Arctic Cottongrass	<i>Eriophorum scheuchzeri</i>
Alpine Meadow-grass	<i>Poa alpina</i>
Alpine Hair-grass	<i>Deschampsia alpina</i>
Sooty Sedge	<i>Carex misandra</i>
Arctic Wood Rush	<i>Luzula arctica</i>
Wood Rush	<i>Luzula confusa</i>

This list represents those birds, other animals and flowers seen by party members of this tour.

Our thanks go to Wally Thrower for the following report:

‘When we were at Poolepynten on Prins Karls Forland on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> July, myself, Simon and several of our group observed a Purple Sandpiper with distinctive colour rings. I now have details, courtesy of the BTO, of where that bird was ringed:

Ringling Site: Nidingen Island, SW Sweden (57° 18'N, 11° 54'E)  
(That's in the Kattegat, about 30 miles SSW of Göteborg)  
Ringling Date: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006  
Ring Number: 4538251 (Swedish Ringling Scheme) plus colour rings, yellow above light green on right and lilac above metal on left.  
Ringer: Mikael Hake  
Biometrics: Juvenile (born 2006), wing 132mm, weight 65.0g

According to Mikael this bird remained on Nidingen Is. Throughout last winter and well into spring. In fact, they recaptured it on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2007 when it weighed 90.2g, a very plump bird ready for departure. Apparently juvenile Purple Sandpipers often delay departure from Nidingen until early June, so probably don't breed in their first year. Mikael has several previous recoveries from Svalbard of Purple Sandpipers ringed on Nidingen, so this bird fits an established pattern. He was extremely grateful for our observations.



**Snow Bunting**



**Black-legged Kittiwake**



**Atlantic Puffin**



**Barnacle Goose**



**Ivory Gull**



**Arctic Tern**



**Brünnich's Guillemot**



**Purple Sandpiper**



**Bearded Seal**



**Polar Bear and cub**



**Long-tailed Duck**



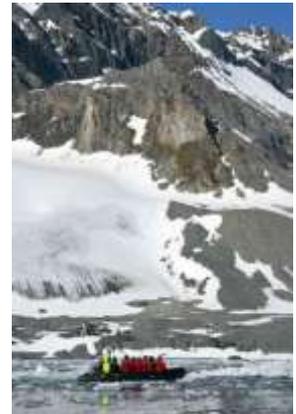
**Arctic Skua**



**Arctic Fox**



**Glaucous Gull**



**Zodiac expedition**



**Walrus**

**Front cover: *The Explorer*  
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