

# Spitsbergen

*Polar Wilderness*

A Greentours Trip Report

9<sup>th</sup> June – 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008

by Jessica Abbott



Photo: Yellow Marsh Saxifrage, Jessica Abbott ©

## **Friday 9th July**

### **Arrival in Longyearbyen**

High cloud, still, 10°C

It was a relief to take off out of the stifling heat of summer in Oslo, and head for the Arctic. It was overcast on our arrival, but the group had some glimpses of snowy mountains through breaks in the cloud as we descended towards Longyearbyen. The air was dry and surprisingly warm as we crossed the tarmac to the arrivals hall to collect our luggage. 10°C is double the average for July. A few sun-rays broke through to shine down on Isfjord as we got into our rented 4x4. We saw our first barnacle geese, and some snow buntings on the drive through town. We arrived at the hotel just in time to witness the midnight sun before saying goodnight.

## **Saturday 10th July**

### **Airport ponds and around Longyearbyen**

High broken cloud, still, 13°C

The Spitsbergen Hotel provides a very impressive breakfast buffet, which makes it hard to get going quickly in the morning. However it is not necessary to leave the dining room to observe the local wildlife. An Arctic Fox trotted past along the road and several Snow Buntings flitted about among the houses. We could also see flocks of Little Auks wheeling above the high cliffs to the west like swarms of flies.

Our first outing was to the airport ponds at Vestpynten. It was warm and there was very little wind so it was pleasant pottering about in the vicinity of the vehicle. We were met by a wonderful display of bird life, including several female King Eiders on the pond itself, and some males among a raft of commons in the main fjord. We quickly ticked off most of the bird species that we would see on the whole trip, including some visiting Wigeon and Teal. A couple of Arctic Skuas flew over very close and then landed and marched about in the camp site beside the road looking for scraps. They were not at all bothered by us or any of the campers.

Just when we were wondering if we had seen everything yet, a Red-throated Diver flew over. The tundra flowers were also putting on a fine show with Moss Campion in its prime and several exuberant clumps of White Arctic Campion enjoying a bit of guano near the ponds. Richard spotted our first distant reindeer on the slopes above the airport near the entrance to the Global Seed Vault.

After lunch and a few essential errands (collecting the rifle and buying chocolate biscuits), we made our first visit to Kloakken, or 'the sewage' which is known as a good birding site in town. We saw our first Glaucous Gull here, and some more Common Eiders. We moved a bit further east along the road out of town to visit some dog kennels where eiders nest for protection against fox predation. One female was sitting tight only a couple of meters from the road. There was a group of Barnacle Geese with goslings on the mud flats north of the road here, but they were much more wary than the eiders. We saw our first Dunlin here too, and met some other birders who said that they had seen Grey Phalaropes a couple of days earlier.



Photo: Common Eider, Jessica Abbott ©

We went looking at the place that they had described, some pools at the mouth of Endalen beyond the main reservoir, Isdammen, but had no luck. We did see another Red-throated Diver flying over though, and some Snow Buntings and Dunlin.

We returned to town with the idea of looking for Boreal Jacob's Ladder near the church where it is reputed to grow. We didn't find it, but very much enjoyed wandering about on the tundra discovering several of the more common, but equally beautiful arctic plants, many of which were in full flower. The Tufted Saxifrage, Drooping Saxifrage, Mountain Avens and Arctic Bell Heather were particularly fine. Little Auks wheeled above us over the cliffs above the town. We took the opportunity to look inside the church, which is permanently open and feels warm and welcoming. Here we saw our third polar bear (our first and second having been in the airport and the supermarket). It made a surreal photograph.

A good way of spotting wildlife in town is to look for the person with the biggest telephoto lens, and then see what they are pointing it at. This worked well on the way back to the hotel where we found a man photographing a couple of Ptarmigan very close to the road. They were slightly bedraggled looking, part way through their moult, and the female was possibly brooding chicks. We left with the idea of returning another time, but in fact we never saw them again.

To complete our tour of Longyerbyen we visited Longyearbreen glacier where we had excellent views of Little Auks flying and settling in the scree above us, along with several Black Guillemots. The laughing noise of the Little Auks was all around, and we got some excellent views of them through the 'scope. It started to rain a bit, and there were 2 pairs of Barnacle Geese with goslings on a small pond by the road, but we carried on to meet

Mary, who had walked back from the church, and have dinner at the hotel. The fox came past again on its evening round.

## **Sunday 11th July**

### **Boat trip to Pyramiden**

Overcast, cloud level falling, still,  $\pm 8^{\circ}\text{C}$

We took a guided boat trip to the deserted Russian mining settlement of Pyramiden up Billefjord, one of the northern arms of Isfjord. We had a friendly and engaging local guide who told entertaining stories along the way. The cloud was high enough in the morning to get good views of the mountains around the fjords on the outward journey. Many Puffins, Black and Brunich's Guillemots, Little Auks and Fulmars flew past over the water close to the boat and there were several distant rafts of eiders as we left Adventfjord and headed north. Many of the Fulmars were dark-phase. We visited bird cliffs at Diabasodden where there is a colony of Brunnich's Guillemots. We passed under more spectacular but distant bird cliffs on the east side of Billefjord with many Fulmars, Kittiwakes and Brunnich's Guillemots on the cliff bands dividing the scree on the unstable mountainside. The boat disturbed a Great Skua that had been eating a dead Fulmar in the water.

We visited the Nordenskjoldbreen glacier where there was a steady stream of Fulmars flying over, presumably taking the short route over to the east coast. Rafts of eider and groups of Barnacle Geese were making use of the sheltered bay, which we also used to eat our barbecue lunch, drifting amongst the bergy bits. We dropped off a hiker to meet a group already camped on the shore, and then crossed the fjord to land at Pyramiden. Pyramiden was Russia's flagship northernmost mining settlement from 1920 to 1998 when it was abruptly abandoned due to financial constraints. It is eerie to see such a town totally empty, with a school, elaborate community hall and sports centre, library, bar and landscaped centre with beautiful meadows where Russian soil was imported to make a central green for families to enjoy. The accommodation blocks now serve as bird cliffs with nesting Kittiwakes crammed onto the windowsills. A nesting Ringed Plover did a broken-wing display as the group went through and very sadly someone trod on the nest which was an upsetting reminder of how much care we need to take as visitors. Surprisingly with all the Russian soil, the vast majority of plants were native, but there was not much time to have a really detailed look. Dandelions were the only obvious invaders.

Leaving Pyramiden the captain kindly detoured towards a raft of eiders by an iceberg where we saw a couple of very nice male Kings and one female. We visited Skansbukta on the return journey, which is a small bay at the western side of the mouth of Billefjord with an abandoned anhydrite mine and a spectacular cirque of cliffs. There were some impressive caverns and buttresses at the mouth of the bay with nesting Fulmars, Kittiwakes and guillemots. A cruise boat was visiting and landing groups with zodiacs. Skansbukta is rich in lime and is known for its beautiful flora. We were delighted to be able to see the Boreal Jacob's Ladder the mouth of the mine with binoculars, without even landing! Richard spotted an unusual gull amongst a group of glaucous gulls at the mouth of the bay, which was not dissimilar to a Thayer's Gull from the Canadian arctic, but which is more likely to be a hybrid between Glaucous and Herring Gull which, unlike Thayer's gull, is known to breed in low numbers on the west coast of Spitsbergen.

## Monday 12th July

### **Eastwards to Svalbardvilmarkssenteret and Endalen**

Overcast, light breeze, 8°C

We started at the dog kennels where we were able to witness a team being harnessed up for a tourist buggy trip. And we saw our first Ivory Gull. It flew around over the kennels and landed among the dogs looking for food. It clearly knows exactly how long their chains are. We made our way slowly along the road east of town leap-frogging with the dog team who had to keep stopping for water out of the reservoir as they overheat so quickly in the summer. The distant groups of Barnacle Geese north of the road were very wary of the dogs. We had a nice view of a small group of Barnacles with goslings swimming on Isdammen, and we also saw our first Pink-Footed Geese along with Arctic Terns, Dunlin and Purple Sandpiper.

Five reindeer were grazing by the road up to mine 6 and the dump, looking bedraggled half way through their moult, and with antlers in velvet. While we watched them we spotted a Purple Sandpiper in the foreground with tiny chicks running about on the tundra. It was a delight to watch them till they scurried off out of view. We turned left along the road towards Svalbardvilmarkssenteret, where there is another dog kennel, and a field of antennae which is a receiving array for a mesosphere-stratosphere-troposphere radar used to examine physical dynamics of the atmosphere. We got out to look at some very fine poppies growing on the gravel by the road. Then we couldn't help but venture a bit further out onto the tundra to look at some other flowers including Alpine Saxifrage, Bluff Cinquefoil, Sulphur-coloured Buttercup and by a very lucky chance, a small clump of Boreal Jacob's Ladder.



Photo: Boreal Jacob's Ladder, Jessica Abbott ©

In the afternoon we ventured up Endalen where there were several intriguing science projects going on along the slopes and a helicopter awaiting duty at the base of the road to the deserted mine 5. We had a brief but unsuccessful search for the Dwarf Birch at the end of the road, but we did find our first example of Dwarf Saxifrage and our first patch of Fir Clubmoss. We then visited Svalbardhytta where there were impressive swathes of Arctic Chickweed growing along the roadsides looking typically dead apart from the profuse white flowers. There were families of Snow Buntings flitting about by the road seeming a bit agitated, and then we saw why when we flushed a Merlin from a telegraph pole by the road. At the end of the road we found two new buttercups on some damp tundra, the pale Svalbard Buttercup, and the tiny creeping Tundra Buttercup.

## **Tuesday 13th July**

### **Bjorndalen**

Clear, light breeze, 11-12°C

British Antarctic Survey's James Clark Ross was coming in as we drove westwards out of town, closely followed by Greenpeace's *Esperanza*, and groups of Black Guillemots returning to the high cliffs. A big cruise ship was docked and disgorging passengers onto the streets and the *Noorderlicht*, a fine red two masted schooner, was also in town. At the airport ponds we saw four female King Eiders and a lot of Kittiwakes washing in the shallow water. An Arctic Skua was patrolling the campsite as before. We drove up towards Plataberget, but discovered that a barrier has been installed half way up the hill to prevent tourists using the road up to the satellite station. However the views were still fine.

At the mouth of Bjorndalen we stopped under a noisy Little Auk colony. There were at least 7 male and 2 female King Eiders among rafts of Common Eiders at the estuary. We could see some Brunnich's Guillemots nesting on Fuglefjellet on the far side of the mouth of the valley and there were Kittiwakes, Fulmars and Glaucous Gulls about. We found our first Hawk-leaved Saxifrage in the roadside ditch.

We continued round the corner to look up the main valley from the end of the road where there is a deserted mine. There were several reindeer about and an Arctic Skua. We had a lovely close up view of a male reindeer by the road on the way back to the hotel for lunch.

We returned to Bjorndalen after lunch, stopping on the way to take pictures of some dozing Black Guillemots close to the shore by the RIB pontoon. We found Sea Sandwort and some nice clumps of Arctic Chickweed on the beach near the campsite, and saw a group of 17 immature King Eiders out to sea. A little bit further along we saw another group of eiders with 14 Kings amongst them. Just as we were getting back in the car we heard a noise and turned to see two female Common Eiders very close to the shore defending their young against a threatening Glaucous Gull. The youngsters crowded very close to the females and dived each time the gull came down while the females reared up in the water beating with their wings and barking aggressively at the gull. We were relieved when the gull backed off a bit, but it settled down on the water near the ducks to bide it's time.

We had only just got back in the car when we saw some Arctic Terns mobbing an Arctic Skua on the inland side of the road, and then the terns and the skua turned to mobbing an

Arctic Fox that was searching the tundra for nests. The fox proceeded casually under severe attack and we witnessed it finding what looked like an egg, and then a chick a bit further on. Richard managed to get a photo of the skua tweaking the fox's ear!

We returned to our new favourite spot underneath the Little Auk colony at the mouth of Bjorndalen where we saw a flock of about 200 eiders with about 50 Kings among them! We found a couple of new plants including Foliolose Saxifrage and a couple of whitlow grasses, as well as some beautiful Yellow Marsh Saxifrage.

On the way home we stopped to watch a Purple Sandpiper with three chicks foraging among the tundra flowers by the road. They had been lucky to escape the fox. On the way back past the campsite we were able to see where the Arctic Skuas were nesting when one of them returned to the nest after a session of mocking some huskies on a carriage tour. The *Nooderlicht* was just leaving the bay and we stopped to photograph her red hull against the mountains and glaciers of Oscar II land, under the blue sky.



Photo: Svalbard Reindeer, Jessica Abbott ©

## Wednesday 14th July

### **Mine 7 and Adventdalen, Bjordalen**

Clear with cloud gathering later, fresh breeze, 8-9°C cooling to 6°C

This morning the fox gave way to a reindeer for the morning wildlife walk-past outside the dining room. A bus waited patiently as he sauntered lazily across the road. Clear skies encouraged us to pack sandwiches and head for Adventdalen and Mine Number 7 to gain some altitude and see the view. We started with a small detour up to Nybyen to have a look at some Purple Saxifrage among the scree below Larsbreen. The dogs were getting ready for another tour at the kennels and another Ivory Gull was hanging about. This one had no ring, whereas the one that we saw before had a ring, so this was our second individual. There were a lot of Barnacle Geese on the estuary flats as usual, but notably no pink feet today. Also no phalaropes, but we did see a Pintail over Isdammen.

Adventdalen was looking very fine with its patchwork of different coloured vegetation, the ochre of the Arctic Saltmarsh Sedge, the bright green of the horsetails and the exuberant white fruits of the cotton grass. At mine 7 we got out onto wet mud where the snow had only recently melted and meltwater from persistent higher snow patches was still flowing down over the waterlogged ground. There were lots of Sulphur-coloured Buttercups and Mary also found the delicate Brook Saxifrage. Notably there was no wind on top of the hill compared to the windy valley, which is quite a typical phenomenon in Svalbard. We heard a familiar call and then three Golden Plover flew over, adding another vagrant to our bird list. We stopped to take photographs on the way down and admire the poppies on the dry gravelly ridges, taking care to keep out of the way of the heavy coal trucks coming down the steep track heading for the power station in town.

Back in the windy valley we found a shed to shelter behind near Svalbardvilmarksseneret to eat our lunch with some pretty Pygmy Buttercup and pools with cotton grass at our feet. There were a couple of Arctic Skuas about, and a beautiful view inland over the wide braided river bed. A local practical joker had us momentarily puzzled by leaving a clutch of 3 white eggs on the tundra near the shed, but after approaching, wondering what new and interesting species this could be, we saw that they were hard boiled hens' eggs!

We returned slowly towards town and had some good views of Dunlin displaying and calling on a small pool by the turn-off to Svalbardvilmarkssenteret. There were a couple of reindeer north of the road, and some more Dunlin, and we stopped to look at a pair of Purple Sandpipers on an old log. One of them had a pale green tag and an orange ring, similar to one that we had seen on the first day at the airport pools. We saw another one with the same system at Kloakken and later found out that these belong to a group of 520 that were ringed at Longyearbyen in May and June this year. There were many Dunlin at the ponds by the kennels, and many Kittiwakes at the airport pools as we headed back to Bjordalen. Noticeably there were many more Fulmars flying along the shore today making use of the wind. There was an interesting cloud effect where a blanket of cloud on the fjord was piling up against the hills above Hiorthamn. An Arctic Skua came and sat on a gravel bank right outside the car window almost asking to have its photograph taken. Continuing, we had another lovely view of two male reindeer above the road. Notably we have only seen male reindeer along the roads around town. Presumably the females and calves are a little more shy.



We witnessed the usual rich display of bird life at the mouth of the valley, including a big mixed group of eiders and small mixed group near the shore which provided excellent views through the 'scope. There was a photographer taking pictures of a group of Little Auks perched obligingly on a rock at the base of the scree, and we watched a fox pass very close to him as it searched the rocks for chicks. Mary, developing a sharp eye for the flora, discovered the Net-leaved Willow, and the Nodding Sedge growing nearby. Richard took some pictures of Snow Buntings as they returned to feed young among the rocks and a couple clearly showed that the adults were bringing back plant material. This was an interesting illustration of the scarcity of terrestrial invertebrates in Svalbard.

The icy wind and gathering cloud from the sea made the temptation of free waffles and coffee to difficult to resist today. These were followed almost immediately by dinner, and as we settled down for coffee in the lounge afterwards, a fox came down the scree behind the hotel. Unfortunately it does get fed from the windows, but we also got the best view that we had had yet of a fox, and got some good photographs.



Photo: Arctic Cotton Grass, Jessica Abbott ©

## **Thursday 15th July**

### **Longyearbreen, kennels, airport ponds, shopping.**

Clear, light breeze, 7°C

We started to realise that we have been very lucky with the weather on this trip. Having already driven along all the roads available to us, we were able to choose a few of our favourite places to re-visit. We started by driving south towards Longyearbreen where we were rewarded by a particularly fine reindeer with a spectacular rack of antlers. He was so close that we were able to see that he was very efficiently and selectively eating bistort flowers with their nutritious bulbils. At the end of the road we walked over the scree for a short distance to a nice patch of vegetation with lovely Tufted Saxifrage, Alpine Saxifrage, and what appeared to be a possible hybrid between the Alpine and Tufted Saxifrages.

On the way back to town Richard spotted our first and only Snow Buttercup by side of road. We have seen a lot of Sulphur-coloured and had hoped to also see the Snow. The two pairs of Barnacle Geese that we had seen on the first day were back at the pond by the road, with six goslings between them.

Next we visited the kennels, which has been a favourite spot for watching the huskies as well as the Common Eiders and Ivory Gulls, and then backtracked into town to Kloakken. This time we went down a different road in the vicinity of the snowscooter rental outlets and by happy chance found Oysterplant on the shore, right outside someone's front door.

Of course we had to visit the airport ponds as well, where there were Kittiwakes and seven female King Eiders on an island as well as a couple of Barnacle Geese and a Purple Sandpiper. There were another six female eiders out at sea among a raft of about thirty.

The afternoon was spent shopping for souvenirs in town, but we could not help doing a little botanising outside the museum, where we found our first nice example of Polar Campion, and some particularly exuberant Arctic Cotton Grass. We made it back to the hotel in time to have some more free waffles and get out our maps and species lists to review where we had been and what we had seen. On special request we had the chef's brownies for desert for our last meal, and Richard managed to secure a copy of the recipe, which makes enough brownies for - well - a large hotel. The Arctic Fox obligingly trotted past during dinner to say goodbye.

## **Friday 16th July**

Overcast, still, 8°C

We visited the museum where the photographer that we had met at Bjorndalen said he had seen a Grey Phalarope out to the east of Isdammen the day before. We made one last minute run out to see if we could find it, but no luck. Richard also managed a quick trip to Kloakken where he saw three Long-tailed Ducks and a Purple Sandpiper with an orange flag, meaning that it had been tagged at South Cape in 2009. We had just enough time to visit the airport ponds one last time before leaving, where Richard and Elizabeth were hassled by Arctic Terns despite the fact that they were only on the road. We had good views of the mountains flying out, noticing a remarkable reduction in snow cover

since our arrival. It was a long journey home with stops in Tromso and Oslo where the vegetation seemed almost unreasonably lush, but we made it safely to Heathrow and said goodbye.



Photo: Arctic Fox, Jessica Abbott ©

## Flora - species seen

| English name              | Latin name                       | Abundance and locations                              |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Field Horsetail           | <i>Equisetum arvense</i>         | common   |
| Fir Clubmoss              | <i>Huperzia selago</i>           | uncommon, Gruve 5 and Bjorndalen                     |
| Polar Willow              | <i>Salix polaris</i>             | very common  |
| Net-leaved Willow         | <i>Salix reticulata</i>          | Bjorndalen only                                      |
| Alpine Bistort            | <i>Polygonum viviparum</i>       | very common  |
| Mountain Sorrel           | <i>Oxyria digyna</i>             | very common  |
| Snow Pearlwort            | <i>Sagina nivalis</i>            | airport ponds, Pyramiden                             |
| Mountain Sandwort         | <i>Minuartia rubella</i>         | airport ponds  |
| Sea Sandwort              | <i>Honckenya peploides</i>       | airport ponds  |
| Fringed Sandwort          | <i>Arenaria pseudofrigida</i>    | airport ponds  |
| Tundra Chickweed          | <i>Stellaria crassipes</i>       | common   |
| Arctic Chickweed          | <i>Stellaria humifusa</i>        | common   |
| Arctic Mouseear           | <i>Cerastium arcticum</i>        | common   |
| Polar Champion            | <i>Silene uralensis</i>          | church, museum                                       |
| Arctic White Champion     | <i>Silene furcata</i>            | airport ponds, church, museum, Bjorndalen, Pyramiden |
| Moss Champion             | <i>Silene acaulis</i>            | common   |
| Svalbard Buttercup        | <i>Ranunculus spetsbergensis</i> | Svalbardhytta  |
| Tundra Buttercup          | <i>Ranunculus hyperboreus</i>    | Svalbardhytta  |
| Suphur-coloured Buttercup | <i>Ranunculus sulphureus</i>     | common   |
| Snow Buttercup            | <i>Ranunculus nivalis</i>        | longyearbreen road                                   |
| Pygmy Buttercup           | <i>Ranunculus pygmaeus</i>       | common   |
| Svalbard Poppy            | <i>Papaver dahlianum</i>         | common   |
| Polar Scurvygrass         | <i>Cochlearia groenlandica</i>   | common   |
| Cushioned Whitlow-grass   | <i>Draba corymbosa</i>           | Svalbardvill   |
| Pale Whitlow-grass        | <i>Draba oxycarpa</i>            | Bjorndalen, Endalen                                  |
| Golden Whitlow-grass      | <i>Draba alpina</i>              | Endalen, Bjorndalen                                  |

| English name                  | Latin name  | Abundance and locations   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Snow Whitlow-grass            | <i>Draba nivalis</i>                                | Bjorndalen  |
| Lapalnd Whitlow-grass         | <i>Draba lactea</i>                                 | Bjorndalen  |
| Hemispherical Whitlow-grass   | <i>Draba subcapitata</i>                            | Endalen   |
| Scree Whitlow-grass           | <i>Draba daurica</i>                                | church, Pyramiden,<br>Bjorndalen  |
| Mealy Whitlow-grass           | <i>Draba arctica</i>                                | airport ponds, Pyramiden,<br>Svalbarvillmarkssenteret,<br>Endalen, Bjorndalen   |
| Purple Saxifrage              | <i>Saxifraga oppositifolia</i>                      | common  |
| Hawk-leaved Saxifrage         | <i>Saxifraga hieracifolia</i>                       | Bjorndalen  |
| Alpine Saxifrage              | <i>Saxifraga nivalis</i>                            | Svalbardvillmarkssenteret,<br>Longyearbreen   |
| Dwarf Saxifrage               | <i>Saxifraga tenuis</i>                             | Endalen   |
| Foliose Saxifrage             | <i>Saxifraga foliosa</i>                            | Bjorndalen  |
| Yellow Marsh Saxifrage        | <i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>                           | common  |
| Drooping Saxifrage            | <i>Saxifraga cernua</i>                             | common  |
| Highland Saxifrage (or brook) | <i>Saxifraga rivularis</i>                          | Bjorndalen, gruve 7   |
| Saxifrage sp.                 | <i>Hybrid between S.caespitosa<br/>+ S.nivalis?</i> | Longyearbreen   |
| Svalbard Saxifrage            | <i>Saxifraga svalbardensis</i>                      | ? one candidate in Bjorndalen<br>appeared to be hybrid<br>between <i>S.rivularis</i> and<br><i>S.cernua</i> (both present in<br>vicinity) |
| Tufted Saxifrage              | <i>Saxifraga caespitosa*</i>                        | common  |
| Bluff Cinquefoil              | <i>Potentilla chamissonis</i>                       | Svalbardvillmarkssenteret   |
| Red-stemmed Cinquefoil        | <i>Potentilla rubricaulis</i>                       | Airport ponds   |
| Mountain Avens                | <i>Dryas octopetalla</i>                            | common  |
| White Arctic Bell Heather     | <i>Cassiope tetragona</i>                           | common  |
| Boreal Jacob's ladder         | <i>Polemonium boreale</i>                           | common  |
| Oysterplant                   | <i>Mertensia maritima</i>                           | Kloakken  |
| Hairy lousewort               | <i>Pedicularis hirsuta</i>                          | common  |
| Dandelion                     | <i>Taraxacum sp.</i>                                | Pyramiden   |

| English name             | Latin name                     | Abundance and locations  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tundra Rush              | <i>Juncus albescens</i>        | Adventdalen              |
| Two-flowered Rush        | <i>Juncus biglumis</i>         | airport ponds            |
| Northern Woodrush        | <i>Luzula confusa</i>          | common                   |
| Arctic Woodrush          | <i>Luzula arctica</i>          | common                   |
| Arctic Cottongrass       | <i>Eriophorum scheuchzeri</i>  | common                   |
| Arctic Saltmarsh Sedge   | <i>Carex subspathacea</i>      | common in Adventdalen    |
| Nodding Sedge            | <i>Carex misandra</i>          | Bjorndalen               |
| Polar Foxtail            | <i>Alopecurus borealis</i>     | common                   |
| Outspread Snow-grass     | <i>Phippsia concinna</i>       | museum only              |
| Spiked Snow-grass        | <i>Phippsia algida</i>         | dog kennels              |
| Narrow Small Reed        | <i>Calamagrostis stricta</i>   | Adventdalen              |
| Tufted Hair Grass        | <i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i>  | airport ponds, kennels   |
| Tundra Hair Grass        | <i>Deschampsia borealis</i>    | common                   |
| Alpine Hair Grass        | <i>Deschampsia alpina</i>      | hotel                    |
| Northern Oat Grass       | <i>Trisetum spicatum</i>       | common                   |
| Northern Meadow Grass    | <i>Poa alpigena</i>            | Pyramiden                |
| Arctic Meadow Grass      | <i>Poa arctica</i>             | airport ponds, church    |
| Alpine Meadow Grass      | <i>Poa alpina</i>              | church, Pyramiden        |
| Glaucous Meadow Grass    | <i>Poa glauca</i>              | church                   |
| Tundra Grass             | <i>Dupontia fisheri</i>        | Adventdalen              |
| Polar Saltmarsh Grass    | <i>Puccinellia angustata</i>   | Pyramiden + Longyearbyen |
| Creeping Saltmarsh Grass | <i>Puccinellia phryganodes</i> | common                   |
| Red Fescue               | <i>Festuca rubra</i>           | Longyearbyen             |
| Arctic Fescue            | <i>Festuca cryophila</i>       | common                   |
| Viviparous Fescue        | <i>Festuca vivipara</i>        | scattered                |

## **Birds and Mammals - species seen**

| English name           | Latin name                      | Abundance and location                                     |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Red-throated Diver     | <i>Gavia stellata</i>           | only 2 seen flying inland, airport ponds, Adventdalen      |
| Northern Fulmar        | <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>       | common   |
| Pink-footed Goose      | <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>     | common Adventdalen   |
| Barnacle Goose         | <i>Branta leucopsis</i>         | common   |
| Eurasian Wigeon        | <i>Anas penelope</i>            | 1 seen airport ponds                                       |
| Eurasian Teal          | <i>Anas crecca</i>              | 1 seen airport ponds                                       |
| Northern Pintail       | <i>Anas acuta</i>               | 1 seen dog kennels   |
| Common Eider           | <i>Somateria mollissima</i>     | common   |
| King Eider             | <i>Somateria spectabilis</i>    | common, males only seen at sea, some females airport ponds |
| Long-tailed Duck       | <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>        | one seen by RIB harbour                                    |
| Merlin                 | <i>Falco columbarius</i>        | one seen Svalbardhytta                                     |
| Rock Ptarmigan         | <i>Lagopus muta</i>             | pair seen Longyearbyen                                     |
| Golden Plover          | <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>      | 3 seen flying over Gruve 7                                 |
| Common Ringed Plover   | <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>     | several seen nesting                                       |
| Dunlin                 | <i>Calidris alpina</i>          | common   |
| Purple Sandpiper       | <i>Calidris maritima</i>        | common   |
| Great Skua             | <i>Stercorarius skua</i>        | 1 seen Billefjord  |
| Arctic Skua            | <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i> | common   |
| Glaucous Gull          | <i>Larus hyperboreus</i>        | common   |
| Ivory Gull             | <i>Pagophila eburnea</i>        | 2 individuals seen kennels                                 |
| Black-legged Kittiwake | <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>         | common   |
| Arctic Tern            | <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>        | common   |
| Little Auk             | <i>Alle alle</i>                | common   |
| Brunnich's Guillemot   | <i>Uria lomvia</i>              | common   |
| Black Guillemot        | <i>Cepphys grylle</i>           | frequent   |
| Atlantic Puffin        | <i>Fratercula arctica</i>       | frequent   |

| English name | Latin name                             | Abundance and location       |
|--------------|--|------------------------------|
| Snow Bunting | <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>           | common                       |
| Arctic Fox   | <i>Alopex lagopus</i>                  | frequent, especially in town |
| Reindeer     | <i>Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus</i> | common                       |
| Harbour Seal | <i>Phoca vitulina</i>                  | 1 seen Isfjord               |