

## 2022 North Atlantic Odyssey

June 2. Yesterday Imie brought Annelien and me to the railway station Ede-Wageningen. Trains to Roosendaal were as scheduled. In Roosendaal, we had one hour delay due to a last-minute platform change that was followed by a switch failure. Overnight stay in Hotel Zilt, Vlissingen. Nice hotel, friendly people, old building, wooden floor, bit noisy. Dinner at an Italian restaurant. According to Trip Advisor the best wood oven pizzas, but ours were salty and a few minutes more in the oven wouldn't have done any harm. After dinner a walk to see the statue of Michiel de Ruyter, a famous Dutch pirate. Breakfast. Walked to the railway station. Fine weather, spend some time at the sluice. Our bus driver got lost in the harbor. We made it to the Ortelius, and after instructions and emergency training, we left Vlissingen at about 14.00. Sunny, windmill parks at sea, not many birds. The Ortelius is an expedition ship of Ocean Wide, and travels in the Antarctic and Arctic. We have a cabin (510), two single beds, two bottles of wine, three windows, and private facilities.



June 3. North Sea, latitude border between UK and Scotland. Awake at 04.30, on deck at 05.10, now 18.07. Calm sea, speed 20 km/hour. Passed the Dogger Bank this morning, only 12 meter of water. Relatively bird rich. Birds included Razorbills, Guillemots, Gannets, Fulmars, Kittiwakes, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. And a surprising Lesser Whitethroat on board. Two White-beaked and three Striped Dolphins seen, possibly a sighting of an Orca. A large dorsal fin briefly appeared. Collected a

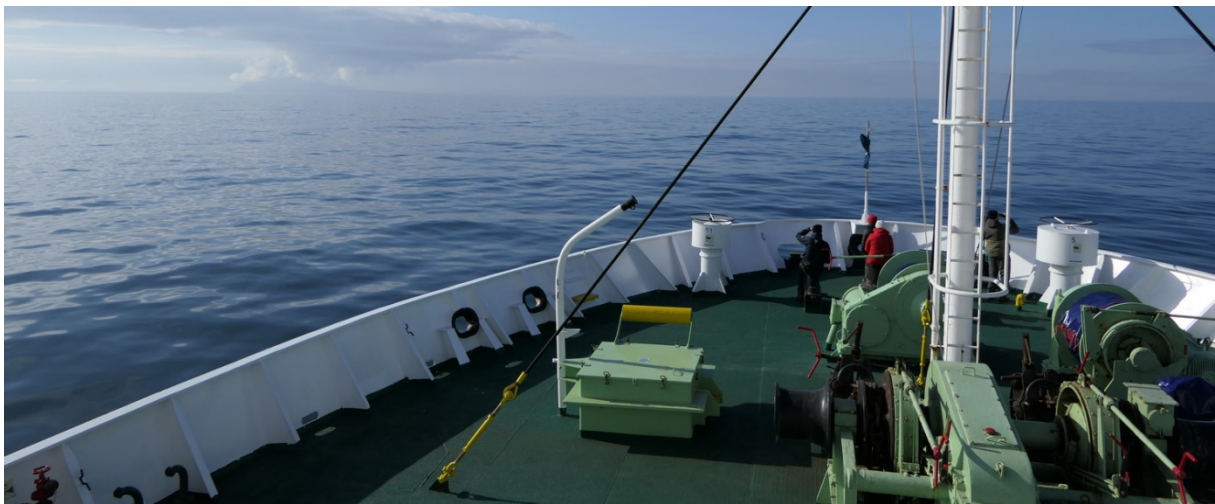
pair of polar boots. Annelien suffers from sea sickness and needed scopolamine. During dinner spoke to Welmoed, a lady from Amsterdam, who told her family includes famous Dutch writers as Eduard Douwes-Dekker, Menno ter Braak and Nienke van Hichtum, and who was ship wrecked near New Guinea years ago.

June 4. Awake at 05.00. Now about 20.40. Hope to visit Fair Isle tomorrow. At 14.00 we received instructions regarding the use of life jacket and zodiacs. Weather started greyish, but the sun came out and it warmed up. Not much wind. New birds included a male Long-tailed Duck, Common Scoters, Puffins, and one Great Northern Diver. At 19.00, just when dinner was ready, there was an announcement that a White-throated Needletail was flying above the ship. Amazing rarity! Apart from being tiny and having a white rump, the hooked flight is very characteristic. Also two Barn swallows, and Storm Petrels. Latter well seen. One Grey Seal.

June 5. Fair Isle. When I came on deck at 06.00, the ship was moored at Fair Isle already.



Bare, green and plenty of sheep. Due to a time zone difference and a Sunday, we couldn't land by zodiacs before 09.30. Didn't leave before 10.30 because several outboard motors didn't start. Hardly any wind, not cold. Spectacular scenery. Nesting Puffins at close range, great views of breeding Fulmars and Great Skuas. In the townhall, the locals served hot drinks and cookies, and we were offered local knitted gloves and scarves. Returned to the Ortelius around 15.00, rest of the day spent outside. Now 22.25. Today we saw two harbor porpoises, one Minke Whale, and five or six White-beaked Dolphins. Saw quite some birds at Fair Isle (see list), including Black Guillemots, Twites, possibly a Red-rumped Swallow, Shags, and a Long-tailed Duck.



June 6. On deck at 06.00. Boring. Entered the Atlantic Ocean, drizzle. In the afternoon the wind increased and the temperature dropped. New birds included a distant Leach's Petrel, one Pomarine Skua and Arctic Skuas. One Minke Whale. In the afternoon, somewhere between Fair Isle and Jan Mayen, we encountered a pod of Orca's. Dolphin behavior, very social and interactive. Male dorsal fins are up to 1.80 meter. Regarding the on board routine. Wake-up call at 07.30, breakfast from 08.00, lunch starting at 12.30, call for dinner at 18.30, and dinner at 19.00. Morning and afternoon lectures in the meeting room. Many people using scopolamine, bit wobbly on board. Spoke the first mate, 2800 meter of water where we are now.

June 7. Cold. Both inside and outside the cabin. Slept from about 21.00 to 06.40. Picked up coffee and cookies. Passed the Polar Circle around 09.00, which was celebrated with orange firepots and rockets. Spent most of the day outside or inside the wheelhouse. On the boat one Ringed Plover, one Dunlin, and two Sanderlings. Otherwise quiet. A Minke Whale, immature Kittiwakes and Fulmars, and the first Long-tailed Skuas. At 14.30 an obligatory meeting about the do's and don'ts in the arctic. And information about Jan Mayen. Visit depends on the swell. Changed boots, Annelien felt sick again, spent part of the afternoon in bed. At the end of the day we discovered the heater in our cabin, under the desk.

June 8. Around 06.00 on deck, Jan Mayen visible, including the spectacular Beerenberg, elevation about 2200 meter. Beautiful weather. The captain claimed to have never seen the top of the Beerenberg before. Visiting Jan Mayen in the afternoon was not possible due to swell. The island has several seabird colonies of Fulmars, Little Auks (2000+), and Brünnich's Guillemots (500+). Today four Humpback Whales, including a lobtailing individual, and four Northern Bottlenose Whales (swimming parallel, synchronized, including the blow). Possibly saw a Blue Whale. At 06.15, there was a single

huge straight blow, followed by a very large whale visible before diving. The Plancius had six Blue Whales in the same area a few days earlier. Also Glaucous Gulls and a few Purple Sandpipers.



June 9. 22.40. This morning two Northern Bottlenose Whales and a few undefined blows. A grey and boring day, hardly any birds. A group of swimming seals, possibly Harp Seals. Entered the floe ice around 17.00 (7530.560 N, 000551.204 W). A few occasional seals, and, finally, Ivory Gulls, four or five adults, including two perched at the floe ice, and at least two immatures. No wind, beautiful sea with floe ice, amazing sight at sunset.

June 10. A full day near the floe ice. This morning a pod of at least ten to fifteen Orca's. Difficult to estimate the size of the pod. Behavior included "spy hopping" and sun bathing. Entire day the boat went along the floe ice. Around 16.00 we entered the floe ice, a few distant Ivory gulls, 200-500 Harp Seals, a few Black Guillemots, and 100-300 Little Auks. Now 19.45. Dinner was a BBQ at the rear (helicopter) deck, music, cold. Few glasses of wine, warm cabin, sleep. Weather still fine, bit of fog now and then. Pity we didn't see a Polar Bear.



June 11. Still nice weather, hardly any wind, sunny. Sore throat, did a covid test at the ship's doctor. Negative. Fortunately. Temperature dropped later, followed by a few snowflakes. Now 20.45, finished dinner. Changed directions to Svalbard. Around 21.00-21.30 we passed a place where the water is less deep, which causes "upwelling" of food, which in turn attracts whales, etc. Apart from the usual birds, we saw ten to fifteen Northern Bottlenose Whales, one Fin Whale, and one Blue Whale at the end of the day. After boring hours on deck, suddenly the Blue Whale turned up next to the boat. A long and massive back when diving with a surprisingly small dorsal fin. No lobtailing. Last seen diving in front of the boat, with clearly visible vertebrae, which seems to be a field identification mark. Biggest animal on the planet.



June 12. Developed a cold last night. Sneezing and coughing. Until 22.30 in the wheelhouse, didn't sleep until 02.00. Slept till 06.00. This morning in the first of two groups visiting the Walrus at Franz

Joseph (land), a group of nearly 200 islands NE of Svalbard, which belong to Russian territory. Old driftwood, reindeer antler, whale bones, and Scurvy Grass. About fifty Walruses, a pair of Grey Phalarope, one Red-throated Diver, and a single Turnstone. A few Reindeer.



Fine weather, great views. After lunch in bed. Couldn't sleep but suffering from a real bad cold. In the afternoon we were scheduled in the second group to visit a bay for King Eider. Just before the first group left a distant Polar Bear was spotted in front of a glacier. In the end we had great views of a female bear, wearing a transmitter. Stunning views in front of the glacier. Walking, swimming, standing up, sleeping on the beach. A handful of Red-throated Divers and 30-40 King Eiders. There is a farewell party tonight, but went straight to bed after dinner. Bad cold, full nose.



June 13. Spectacular scenery with glaciers, snow and mountains. Now 05.40. Not warm. Wake-up call at 06.30, breakfast at 07.00 and then left the boat. Until now the weather has been fine. Although the crew, cabin, food and ship are all excellent, daily programs seem scheduled around lectures and meals, rather than the other way round. Which is a pity, although I think that most people on board don't care. Coughing hurts. Woke up Annelien one hour too early. Went for espresso with chocolate. Last breakfast at the Ortelius. Went from board at Longyearbyen (Svalbard) at 09.10. Dropped our luggage at the Svalbard Hotel. Walked in the village, reminded me of Western USA. Many construction works ongoing, mostly unpaved roads, new wooden houses, and everywhere 4WDs, bicycles and snow mobiles. Snow Buntings common. Walked to the dog kennel. Great scenery,

beautiful dogs and little ponds with (breeding) Eider and Barnacle Geese. Saw a few Arctic Foxes downtown, one being attacked by a breeding Arctic Skua. After a cup of coffee we went with a local (pre-arranged) boat tour, which wasn't as good as expected. Perhaps we were spoiled. Nevertheless, we saw swimming Walruses and an amazing scenery, with glaciers dropping into the Arctic Ocean.



June 14. Slept well until 06.30, despite the cold. Breakfast at 07.15, and then started walking. Saw a distant Rock Ptarmigan flying over the road and landing behind the church. Walked there and had great views of a male. Saw two males flying through Longyearbyen, chasing each other. The black tail and red eye lobes are surprisingly well visible in flight. Beautiful weather, made some pictures of a reindeer. At 10.00 we visited the ponds near the camping and airport (by car). The year before, the Dutch owner of the campground was killed by a Polar Bear. A male King Eider and a pair of Red-throated Divers. Early lunch, followed by a walk along the graveyard, the church, dog kennel and then back to town. A Wheatear (possibly the rarest bird seen on Spitsbergen), Kittiwakes and

Glaucous Gulls, and a few waders near the dog kennel (Purple Sandpiper, a female Grey Phalarope, and a single Ringed Plover). Walked back through the outskirts of Longyearbyen, skis and snow mobiles, caravans on ski, etc. A large wooden Polar Bear at a children's playground, true craftsmanship. Bought some food for dinner and local beer (Svalbard claims to have the Northernmost brewery). Only dogs and reindeer seen, but no cows, horses, sheep, trees or shrubs.



At 19.00 we visited to Adventalen. In total about fifty people in five or six vans. Due to the presence of Polar Bears, walking in and around Longyearbyen is restricted. Great views of Red-throated Divers, displaying Dunlins and Purple Sandpipers, a few Grey and Red-necked Phalaropes, a distant Arctic Fox, Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese. Saw soil that was burst open, ice underneath. Back in the room, now 23.05 and still light, enjoyed the "Spitsbergen White IPA" and "Gruve 3".



June 17. Back home. June 15, our last day on Spitsbergen, walked to 10.30. Picked up by an Inezia (tour operator) van, and were dropped at the airport. Tiny airport, crowded with passengers. Checking the luggage was chaotic and time consuming. Our flight to Oslo (SK4491, scheduled departure 13.25) was delayed by 45 minutes, only one hour to switch planes in Oslo. Although Svalbard is considered to be part of Norway, in reality the Norse consider Svalbard as independent, meaning there is a passport control at the Oslo airport. Our passports were not recognized by the “do-it-yourself” scanners, and our cabin luggage was checked again. Camera’s had to be taken out, as well as our cell phones, belts, watches, etc. We ran to the gate (to catch the flight to Copenhagen; SK1465, scheduled departure 17.15), but the gate was closed. Fortunately, they re-opened the gate and hence we made it. Tight. Also this flight was slightly delayed due to computer issues. In Copenhagen we had no problems. Our final flight to Schiphol (SK549; scheduled departure 20.10) was on time, switched trains in Utrecht, and arrived at railway station Ede-Wageningen at 23.30. Jelle and Imie picked us up.



Note. Although the covid (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic seems passed. The H5N1 avian influenza virus was spreading, and also seabird colonies are infected. We saw multiple floating corpses of mostly Northern Gannets and Great Skuas.

## BIRDS

### GAVIIDAE

**Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata*



**Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica*

**Great Northern Diver (Common Loon)** *Gavia immer*

### PROCELLARIIDAE

**Norther Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis*



HYDROBATIDAE

**European Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus*

**Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

SULIDAE

**Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus*



PHALACROCORACIDAE

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

**European Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

ANATIDAE

**Pink-footed Goose** *Anser brachyrhynchus*



**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

**Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*

**King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis*



**Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima*



**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

TETRAONIDAE

**Rock Ptarmigan** *Lagopus mutus*



ACCIPITRIDAE

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

HAEMATOPODIDAE

**Eurasian Oysterdatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

CHARADRIIDAE

**(Common) Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

SCOLOPACIDAE

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*



**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*



**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*



**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*  
**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*  
**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*  
**Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicaria*

STERCORARIIDAE

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*  
**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*



**Great Skua** *Catharacta skua*



**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*



LARIDAE

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*

**Mew Gull** *Larus canus*

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*



**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

**Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea*



STERNIDAE

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*



ALCIDAE

**Common Guillemot** *Uria aalge*

**Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia*

**Razorbill** *Alca torda*

**Black Guillemot** *Cepphus grylle*

**Little Auk** *Alle alle*



**Atlantic Puffin** *Fratercula arctica*





#### APODIDAE

**White-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus caudacutus*



**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

#### ALAUDIDAE

**Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

**Common House Martin** *Delichon urbica*

#### MOTACILLIDAE

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus*

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

#### TURDIDAE

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

#### SYLVIIDAE

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

CORVIDAE

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

STURNIDAE

**Common Starlin** *Sturnus vulgaris*

PASSERIDAE

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

FRINGILLIDAE

**Twite** *Carduelis flavirostris*

EMBERIZIDAE

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*



## MAMMALS

URSIDAE

**Polar Bear** *Ursus arctos*



CANIDAE

**Arctic Fox** *Vulpes lagopes*





PHOCIDAE

**Harbor Seal** *Phoca vitulina*

**Grey Seal** *Halichoerus grypus*

**Ringed Seal** *Pusa hispida*

ODOBENIDAE

**Walrus** *Odobenus rosmarus*





CERVIDAE

**Reindeer** *Rangifer tarandus*



BALAENOPTERIDAE

**Minke Whale** *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

**Blue Whale** *Balaenoptera musculus*



**Fin Whale** *Baleoptera physalus*



**Humpback Whale** *Baleoptera novaeanglia*



**ZIPHIIDAE**

**Northern Bottlenose Dolphin (Whale)** *Hyperoodon ampullatus*



DELPHINIDAE

**Killer Whale (Orca)** *Orcinus orca*



**Atlantic White-sided Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus acutus*



**White-beaked Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*



PHOCOENIDAE

**Harbor Porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena*