

Report: Bird monitoring within the fjords at Bjarkalundur-Skálanes in 2025 according to the contract between Vegagerðin and Náttúrustofa Vestfjarða

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This report provides an annual update on the birdlife monitoring conducted by Náttúrustofa Vestfjarða as per contract with Vegagerðin. The project aims to monitor and document bird populations in key fjords of the southern Westfjords region, with a particular focus on wading birds and waterfowl. The data collected contributes to ongoing conservation efforts and helps assess the impact of environmental changes and human activities of the Bjarkalundur-Skálanes road upgrade project.

Methods:

As per the continuation of the contract with Vegagerðin, Náttúrustofa Vestfjarða counted birdlife in Gilsfjörður, Króksfjörður, Berufjörður, Þorskafjörður, Djúpifjörður, and Gufufjörður. As in previous years during baseline counting, observations were conducted from a vehicle using binoculars (8x42) and a window-mounted spotting scope (20-60x). Efforts were made to ensure favourable weather and tide conditions for viewing. Four trips were made: two in spring and two in late summer (Table 1).

Counting areas were divided into smaller units (Figures 1 and 2). During the counting period, the bridge across Þorskafjörður was already completed and open to traffic, while the bridge across Djúpifjörður and Gufufjörður was under construction but the landfilling was completed and therefore creating a possible barrier to bird movement. To improve accuracy, the areas defined in 2021 were slightly modified to correspond to the position of the bridge segments in Gufufjörður and Djúpifjörður. Additionally, the completion of the new road on the north side of Þorskafjörður has opened access to three new areas, which will be included in future counts (Figure 1, transects #28, 29, and 30).

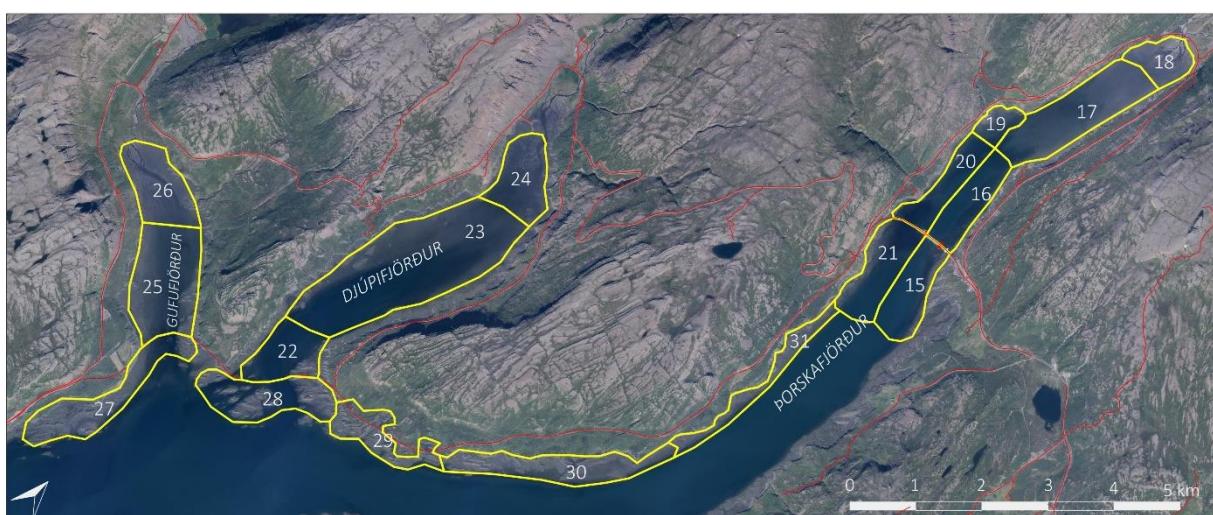


Figure 1. Updated transect boundaries for observation of birdlife in Þorskafjörður, Djúpifjörður, and Gufufjörður.



Figure 2. Updated transect boundaries for observation of birdlife in Gilsfjörður, Króksfjörður, and Berufjörður.

Results:

Wading birds & waterfowl: Two separate counts occurred in the spring, counting all wading birds as well as waterfowl on the shore and nearby areas. A special focus is on the migrating red knot (*Calidris canutus*) which is known to stopover in these important areas to feed on the mudflats. On the first count (18-19 May), 26 species were observed, amounting to a total of 8.713 individuals (Table 2). Most prominent of these was the red knot, totalling 6.334 individuals. On the second count (28-29 May), 22 species were observed, and a total of 1.141 individuals were counted (Table 3).

Waterfowl: Two counts were conducted in late summer, focusing on whooper swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) and other waterfowl. The fjords' shallow nature and extensive shores make them ideal habitats for foraging waterfowl, and is an important area used during the whooper swan's autumn moult. Counts were conducted between high tide and mean sea level. On the first count (18 August), 8 species were recorded with a total of 4.345 individuals observed (Table 4). Of these, 2.038 were whooper swans. During the second count (2 September), 9 species were identified with a total of 1.705 individuals (Table 5). Whooper swans accounted for 521 individuals.

Table 1. Dates, times, conditions and observers for the counts.

| Date | Time | Weather conditions | Observer |
|----------------|--------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 18-19-May-2025 | 15:00-20:00, 06:00-11:30 | Wind 4 m/s (NE), 6°C. Overcast. Partially foggy the 18. Sunny the 19. Good visibility. | Cristian Gallo |
| 28-29-May-2025 | 14:30-22:00, 08:00-12:00 | Wind 4 m/s (NE), 10°C. Good visibility. | Cristian Gallo |
| 18-Aug-2025 | 12:25-17:12 | Wind 8-10 m/s. 12°C, Partly overcast. Good to medium visibility. | Ingrid Bobeková |
| 2-Sep-2025 | 16:00-21:30 | Wind 4 m/s. Sunny. Good visibility. | Cristian Gallo, Christopher Long |

Table 2. Numbers of each species observed in each transect on May 18-19, 2025. Note that sectors which were not counted are omitted from the table.

| 18-19. May 2025 | Species | Counted sectors | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|----|------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-------|----|-----|-----|-------|------|-----|
| | | 1 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25-26 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |
| Red knot | <i>Calidris canutus</i> | 150 | 320 | 940 | 520 | 638 | | | 800 | 170 | 92 | 201 | | 72 | 97 | 85 | 110 | 720 | | 780 | 40 | 17 | 400 | 182 | 6334 | |
| Ruddy turnstone | <i>Arenaria interpres</i> | | 15 | 1 | 5 | | | | 11 | | 3 | 5 | | 9 | 6 | | 5 | | 21 | 2 | 2 | 13 | 2 | 6 | 106 | |
| Purple sandpiper | <i>Calidris maritima</i> | 55 | 4 | | | | | | 5 | | | 55 | 4 | 4 | | 3 | | 11 | 8 | 5 | | | | 12 | 5 | 171 |
| Dunlin | <i>Calidris alpina</i> | 5 | | | | | | | 23 | | 2 | 15 | | 4 | | 5 | | 2 | | 13 | | | | 9 | | 78 |
| Common redshank | <i>Tringa totanus</i> | 11 | 27 | 21 | | 13 | | | 28 | 17 | 2 | 14 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 5 | 16 | 6 | 4 | 213 | |
| Eurasian oystercatcher | <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> | | 11 | 12 | 5 | 36 | | 6 | 25 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 8 | 169 | |
| Black tailed godwit | <i>Limosa limosa</i> | 10 | 16 | 1 | 10 | 6 | | | 69 | 9 | 10 | 8 | | | 10 | 3 | | 3 | | 5 | 4 | 5 | 7 | | 176 | |
| European golden plover | <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> | 9 | 19 | 3 | | | | | 17 | 7 | 13 | 3 | | 4 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 12 | 2 | 5 | | 10 | 22 | 27 | 168 | |
| Common ringed plover | <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> | 5 | 35 | 2 | 1 | 22 | | 2 | 13 | 5 | | 13 | | | | 5 | | 7 | 8 | 5 | | 2 | 11 | 2 | 138 | |
| Eurasian whimbrel | <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> | 2 | 9 | | 2 | | | | 24 | 3 | 5 | | | | 6 | 1 | | 4 | | 9 | | 1 | 2 | | 68 | |
| Whooper swan | <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> | 2 | | | | 93 | | | | 5 | 2 | | | | 7 | | 70 | | | | | | 1 | 14 | 194 | |
| Greylag goose | <i>Anser anser</i> | | | 7 | | | | | | 2 | | 9 | | | 2 | | | | | | 8 | 2 | | 30 | | |
| Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | 2 | 31 | | 1 | | | | 2 | 6 | | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | | | 2 | 4 | 4 | | 2 | 2 | | 65 | |
| Common eider | <i>Somateria mollissima</i> | 150 | | | 148 | 16 | | | 53 | | | | | 40 | 15 | 33 | 10 | | | 32 | 11 | | 15 | 523 | | |
| Red-breasted merganser | <i>Mergus serrator</i> | | | | | | | | 3 | | | | | | 2 | 1 | | | | | | 4 | | | 10 | |
| Eurasian wigeon | <i>Mareca penelope</i> | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | 2 | | | 2 | | | | | | | | 6 | |
| Harlequin duck | <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | |
| Common shelduck | <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Arctic tern | <i>Sterna paradisaea</i> | 1 | | | | | | | 4 | | | 4 | | 9 | 4 | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 1 | | 26 | |
| Black-headed gull | <i>Larus ridibundus</i> | 4 | 2 | 80 | 40 | 15 | 8 | | 8 | | 13 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | 2 | | | 4 | 1 | | 7 | 3 | | 192 | |
| Glaucous gull | <i>Larus hyperboreus</i> | | | | | | | | 1 | 6 | | | | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | 11 | |
| Great black-backed gull | <i>Larus marinus</i> | 6 | | | | 2 | | 1 | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | 11 | |
| Lesser black-backed gull | <i>Larus fuscus</i> | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | |
| European herring gull | <i>Larus argentatus</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Great cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | | | 6 | | | | | | | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 11 | |
| Black guillemot | <i>Cephus grylle</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | | | | 3 | | |
| All birds | | 179 | 691 | 1017 | 632 | 757 | 258 | 32 | 1026 | 294 | 139 | 345 | 20 | 124 | 187 | 144 | 163 | 857 | 56 | 845 | 89 | 105 | 490 | 263 | 8713 | |

Table 3. Numbers of each species observed in each transect on May 28 and 29, 2025. Note that sectors which were not counted are omitted from the table.

| 28-29-May-2025 | Species | Counted Sectors | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|-------|-------|-----|-----|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25-26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | |
| Purple sandpiper | <i>Calidris maritima</i> | | | 2 | 6 | | | | | | | | 23 | | | 4 | | | | 6 | 2 | 43 | | |
| Dunlin | <i>Calidris alpina</i> | | | | 16 | 8 | | | | 8 | | | | 6 | | 27 | 22 | | 25 | | 20 | 132 | | |
| Common redshank | <i>Tringa totanus</i> | 12 | 3 | 13 | 20 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 9 | 13 | 16 | 14 | 14 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 11 | 16 | 3 | 22 | 5 | 7 | 214 | |
| Eurasian oystercatcher | <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> | 2 | 2 | 2 | 15 | 13 | 5 | 15 | 9 | 16 | 12 | 6 | 12 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 16 | | 2 | 146 | | |
| Black-tailed godwit | <i>Limosa limosa</i> | 3 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 4 | | 9 | | | 8 | 16 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | | | 1 | 81 | | |
| European golden plover | <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> | 2 | | 8 | 4 | 4 | 7 | | 2 | 2 | | | 4 | | | 2 | | 8 | 7 | 6 | | 2 | 58 | |
| Common ringed plover | <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> | 2 | | | 10 | 13 | | | 5 | 3 | | | 3 | | | 3 | | | | 6 | | 4 | 49 | |
| Eurasian whimbrel | <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | | 2 | 8 | | | | | | | 2 | | 4 | | 4 | | | 28 | |
| Common eider | <i>Somateria mollissima</i> | | | | | | | | | 33 | 35 | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 70 | |
| Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | | | | | | 4 | | | | | 6 | | | 5 | | | | | | | 4 | 19 | |
| Red breasted merganser | <i>Mergus serrator</i> | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 | 6 | | |
| Whooper swan | <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> | | | 24 | 2 | 4 | | | | | | 4 | 9 | | | | 80 | | 11 | | | 134 | | |
| Greylag goose | <i>Anser anser</i> | | | | 7 | | 9 | | | | | | 8 | | | | 4 | 4 | 6 | | | 38 | | |
| Arctic tern | <i>Sterna paradisaea</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | | | | | 5 | | |
| Black-headed gull | <i>Larus ridibundus</i> | | 8 | | | | | 4 | 4 | | 6 | 8 | | | 3 | 9 | | | 14 | | | 56 | | |
| Glaucous gull | <i>Larus hyperboreus</i> | | | | | | | | | | | 50 | | | 3 | 2 | | | | | | 55 | | |
| Great black-backed gull | <i>Larus marinus</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Lesser black-backed gull | <i>Larus fuscus</i> | | | 2 | | 2 | | 33 | 39 | 55 | 61 | 77 | 140 | 20 | 40 | 55 | 37 | 143 | 16 | 111 | 2 | 11 | 6 | |
| All birds | | 21 | 20 | 48 | 107 | 42 | 43 | 33 | 39 | 55 | 61 | 77 | 140 | 20 | 40 | 55 | 37 | 143 | 16 | 111 | 2 | 11 | 20 | 1141 |

Table 4. Numbers of each species observed in each transect on August 18, 2025. Note that transects which were not counted are omitted from the table.

| 18 August 2025 | Species | Counted sectors | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----------|-------|-----|------|------|
| 18 August 2025 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 (out) | 26 | | | |
| Common eider | <i>Somateria mollissima</i> | 56 | 61 | | 2 | | 56 | | 23 | | 58 | 683 | 188 | 203 | 8 | | 19 | 91 | 66 | 42 | 9 | 7 | 23 | 25 | 25 | 1620 | | | |
| Eurasian oystercatcher | <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> | | 7 | 3 | 136 | | | | | | | | | | | 16 | | | | | | | | | | | 162 | | |
| Greylag goose | <i>Anser anser</i> | | | 1 | 65 | 26 | 19 | 198 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 7 | 316 | |
| Red-breasted merganser | <i>Mergus serrator</i> | | | | 61 | | | | | | | | | | | | 7 | | | | | | | | | | 7 | 75 | |
| Red knot | <i>Calidris canutus</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 129 | 129 | |
| Red throated loon | <i>Gavia stellata</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 | |
| White-tailed eagle | <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | |
| Whooper swan | <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> | 353 | | 258 | 5 | 483 | 13 | 113 | 55 | | | | | | | 7 | 75 | | | | | | | | | | 10 | 39 | 2039 |
| All birds | | 353 | 117 | 327 | 73 | 647 | 32 | 374 | 55 | 25 | 0 | 81 | 758 | 188 | 203 | 40 | 13 | 19 | 167 | 71 | 64 | 224 | 256 | 263 | 161 | 35 | 46 | 4345 | |



Table 5. Numbers of each species observed in each transect on September 2, 2025. Note that transects which were not counted are omitted from the table.

| 2.September 2025 Species | | Counted sectors | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|-------------|
| | | 11-12 | 14 | 15 | 16-17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22-23 | 24 | 25 | | | |
| Whooper swan | <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> | 203 | 62 | | 84 | 10 | | | 7 | 120 | 2 | 33 | 521 | | |
| Greylag goose | <i>Anser anser</i> | 10 | 31 | 6 | 30 | 12 | 2 | | 6 | | 6 | 5 | 6 | 114 | |
| Pink-footed goose | <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> | 36 | | | | | | | | | | | 36 | | |
| Common eider | <i>Somateria mollissima</i> | 114 | 48 | 61 | 108 | | | | 169 | 34 | 65 | 112 | 711 | | |
| Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | 3 | 5 | 6 | 21 | | 12 | 2 | 5 | | | | 54 | | |
| Red-breasted merganser | <i>Mergus serrator</i> | | 4 | | 15 | | | | 4 | | | 3 | 26 | | |
| Eurasian wigeon | <i>Mareca penelope</i> | 238 | | | | | | | | | | | 238 | | |
| Great cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | | | | 2 | | | 2 | | | | | 4 | | |
| White-tailed eagle | <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| All birds | | 604 | 146 | 77 | 261 | 12 | 24 | 2 | 193 | 154 | 8 | 98 | 5 | 121 | 1705 |

Table 6. List of bird names in English, Latin, and Icelandic.

| English Name | Latin Name | Icelandic Name |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Arctic tern | <i>Sterna paradisaea</i> | Kría |
| Black guillemot | <i>Cephus grylle</i> | Teista |
| Black-headed gull | <i>Larus ridibundus</i> | Hettumáfur |
| Black-tailed godwit | <i>Limosa limosa</i> | Jaðrakan |
| Common eider | <i>Somateria mollissima</i> | Æðarfugl |
| Common loon | <i>Gavia immer</i> | Himbrimi |
| Common merganser | <i>Mergus merganser</i> | Gulönd |
| Common redshank | <i>Tringa totanus</i> | Stelkur |
| Common ringed plover | <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> | Sandlöa |
| Common shelduck | <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> | Brandönd |
| Dunlin | <i>Calidris alpina</i> | Lóuþræll |
| Eurasian oystercatcher | <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> | Tjaldur |
| Eurasian teal | <i>Anas crecca</i> | Urtönd |
| Eurasian whimbrel | <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> | Spói |
| European golden plover | <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> | Heiðlöa |
| Glaucous gull | <i>Larus hyperboreus</i> | Hvítmáfur |
| Great black-backed gull | <i>Larus marinus</i> | Svartbakur |
| Great cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | Dílaskarfur |
| Graylag goose | <i>Anser anser</i> | Grágæs |
| Lesser black-backed gull | <i>Larus fuscus</i> | Sílamáfur |
| Long-tailed tuck | <i>Clangula hyemalis</i> | Hávella |
| Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | Stokkond |
| Pink-footed goose | <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> | Heiðagæs |
| Purple sandpiper | <i>Calidris maritima</i> | Sendlingur |
| Red knot | <i>Calidris canutus</i> | Rauðbrystingur |
| Red-breasted merganser | <i>Mergus serrator</i> | Toppönd |
| Red-throated loon | <i>Gavia stellata</i> | Lómur |
| Ruddy turnstone | <i>Arenaria interpres</i> | Tildra |
| White-tailed eagle | <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> | Haförn |
| Whooper swan | <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> | Álft |



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