

THE

Science & Education Report



MS Spitsbergen

28 Mar – 7 Apr 2026

Nordic Navigator – From Norway's
Wilds to Scotland's Isles





Science & Education Programme

Our Science and Education Team accompanied you during your expedition to the remote communities and impressive nature of Arctic Norway.

We had the opportunity to explore our destinations' natural beauty, exceptional wildlife, and rich culture. We organised lectures and interactive activities on board and explored our destinations on land and from the water.

History & Culture

During our expedition along the Northern Norway, we traced a rich cultural history spanning from the Viking Age to the present. Our visit to Trollfjord, along with the expedition-boat cruise through the surrounding waters, offered a vivid sense of how geography, natural resources, and access to the sea shaped settlement patterns over time. We also learned why churches were often built on small, strategically located islands along historic shipping routes.

Stories from fishing communities further illuminated the seasonal rhythms, adaptability, and resilience that have long defined life along the Norwegian coast.





Lofotfiske

In Lofoten, we explored both the stunning landscapes and the rich history of the region, learning about the famous winter cod fishing season that takes place from January to April. During this period, known as *Lofotfiske*, thousands of fishermen participate in the traditional harvest of *skrei* (cod), the migratory cod which comes to Lofoten to spawn. First practised over a thousand years ago, this fishing tradition continues to thrive today and remains a cornerstone of coastal life in Norway.

The Vikings were the first to hang cod to dry, preserving it for food on their journeys. Today, cod is still dried on racks, just as it was in Viking times.

Scandinavia and Scotland

On our voyage we have sailed in the wake of the Vikings, exploring the cultural connections between Scandinavia and Scotland. In Kirkwall we visited St Magnus Cathedral, a powerful reminder of the close ties between the Orkneys and the Norwegian coast.

On board, we investigated this connection further with talks about the Norse history of the Scottish isles as well as the heroic traffic of small fishing boats sailing from Shetland to occupied Norway with resistance fighters during World War II.





Geology of Norway

Mountains in this part of Norway are composed of Precambrian rocks. These rocks are exposed in basement windows, where erosion and tectonic processes have revealed the deeply buried crystalline basement.

The basement mainly consists of granitic gneisses as well as mangerite and charnockite that are about 1.8 billion years old.

Later, during the Caledonian Orogeny 400 million years ago, a continental collision between two paleo-continent caused significant mountain building and uplifted of those geological terrains.



Beach Clean-Up

In Sandøya, we had a very successful impromptu beach clean-up! The snow had recently melted and exposed a winter's worth of marine debris.

In total, we collected 4 large garbage bags of trash that was brought on board and properly disposed of.

Thank you for helping care for the beautiful places we visit!



Geology of Scotland

Kilt Rock is famous for its basalt columns, formed by volcanic activity around 60 million years ago. The island's geology is similar to that of the Giant's Causeway, with striking hexagonal basalt formations created by slowly cooling lava.

These unique structures are a testament to the volcanic processes of the Paleogene Period, during the opening of the North Atlantic.



iNaturalist

Throughout our expedition, we documented the flora and fauna of Arctic Norway and uploaded all our findings to the iNaturalist biodiversity platform.

During our voyage, we submitted 117 observations of 76 different species. This effort contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the geographical distribution of species and will aid researchers in their ongoing studies and conservation efforts to protect these species.

View our data submitted on our [iNaturalist project](#)



NASA GLOBE Cloud Observer

Together with our Environmental Scientist, Jean, you observed the low-level cloud coverage of the sky and identified strato-cumulus with the help of the NASA GLOBE Cloud Observer on 2 occasions.

These cloud observations help NASA improve the understanding of Earth's atmosphere and climate by providing valuable data for scientific research and climate modelling.

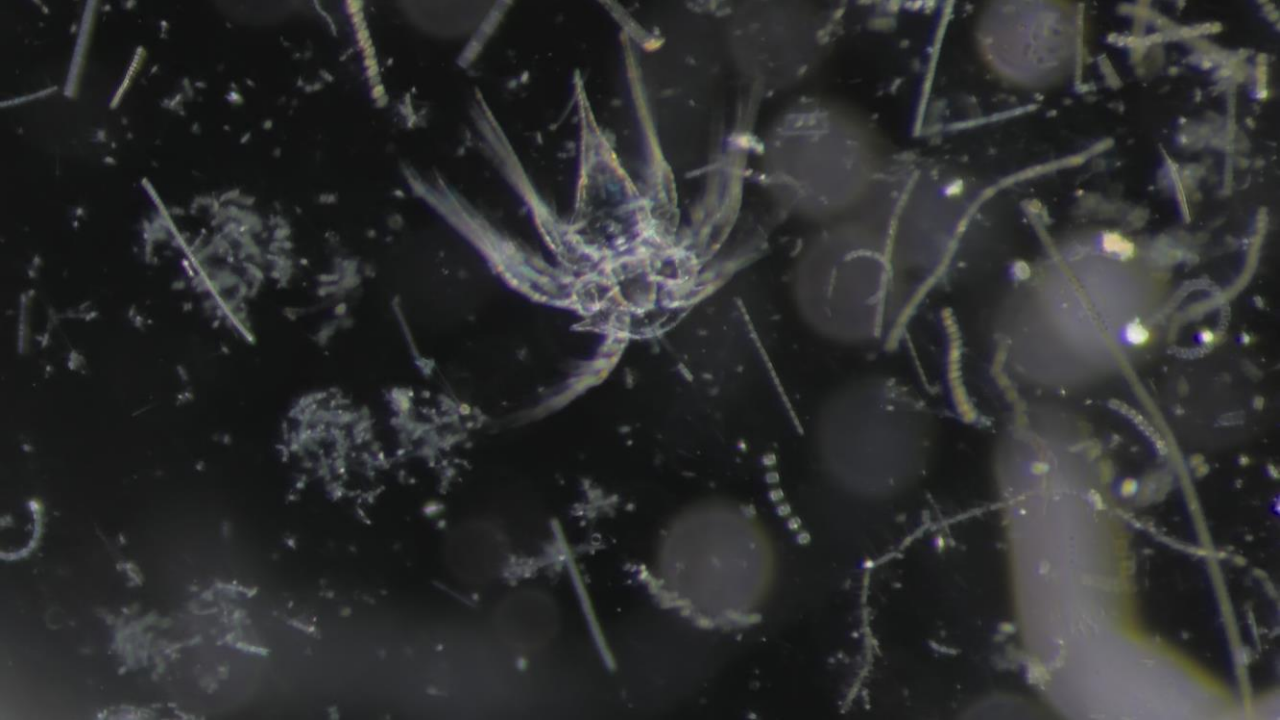
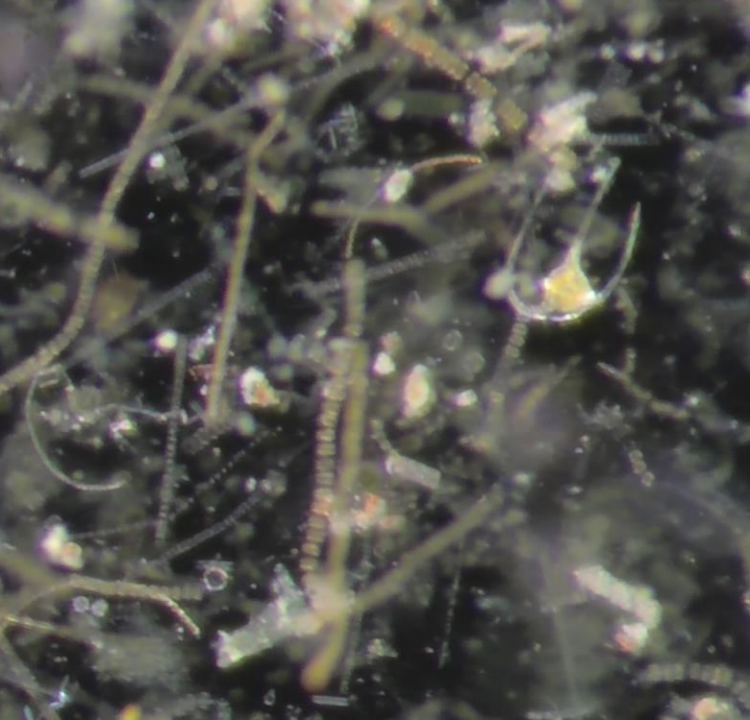
[View our data](#) on the global map

Under the Microscope

Often there is more to see than meets the eye when we take the time to look a little closer.

During our time together, you took part and engaged in several discovery sessions and Explorer Labs in our Science Centre, where we took the time to dig a little deeper.



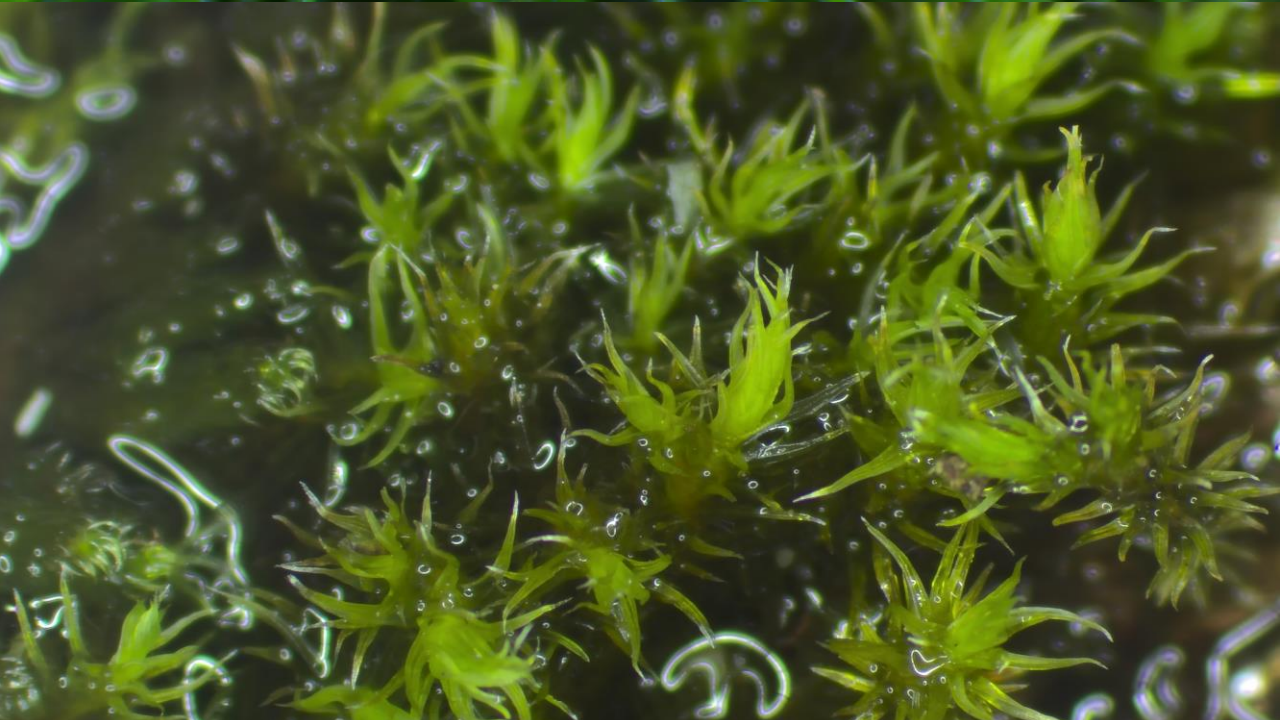


Plankton Samples

We explored the microscopic world of plankton, the tiny organisms that drift in our ocean. Samples were collected at Ulvøya.

We collected a large amount of photosynthetic phytoplankton (pictured top left), as well as some 'wee beasties', like barnacle larvae (bottom left) and fish larvae (top right).

In addition, we found some of the first diatom chains of the spring phytoplankton bloom!



Moss and Lichen

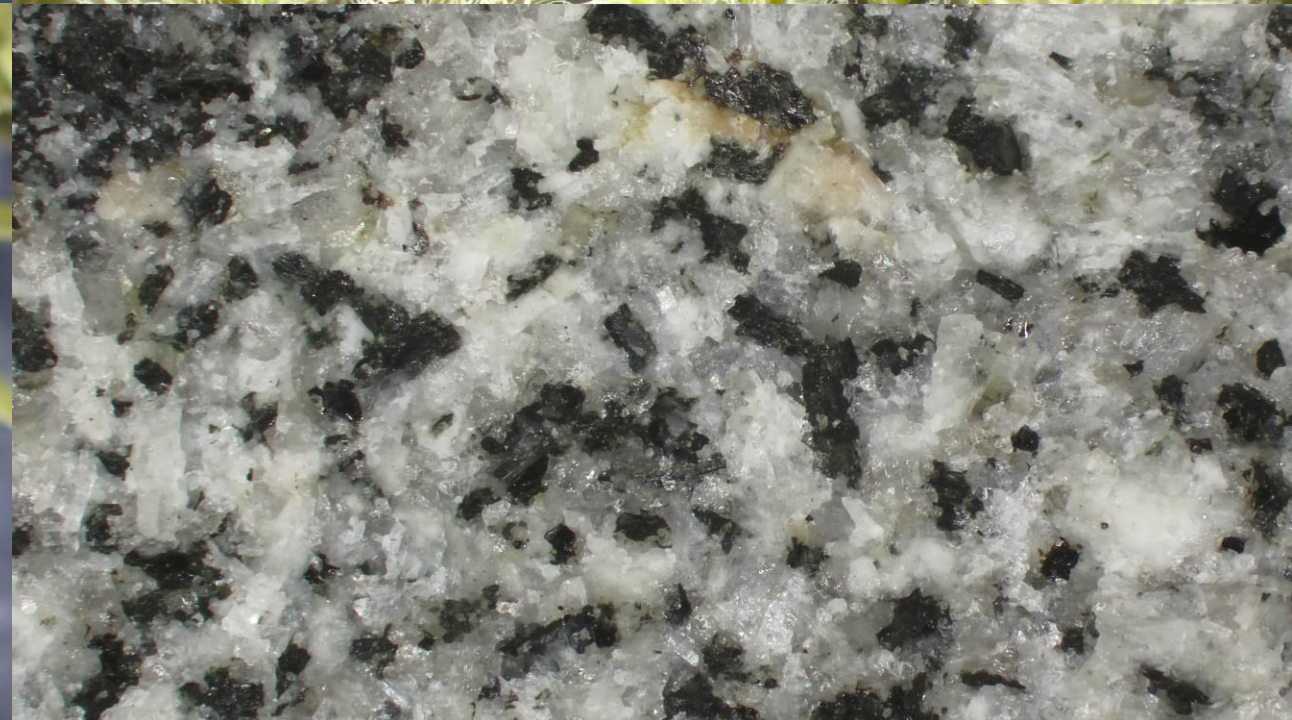
We had a great session exploring moss, lichens, and the little creatures hidden within them. We were able to see the cellular structure of the moss 'leaves', the reproductive sporangium (top left), and the intricate differences between species.

Here are some of the best photos taken during that session. The top right image shows the underside of lichen, and the bottom left photo shows the vibrant green and tiny structures of the moss.

Explorer Labs

Throughout our voyage you had the opportunity to explore different aspects of Arctic Norway under the microscope during our self-guided Explorer Labs.

From Arctic geology and adaptation to the cold to microscopic ecosystems found in moss, you could explore what live in these harsh environments is all about!



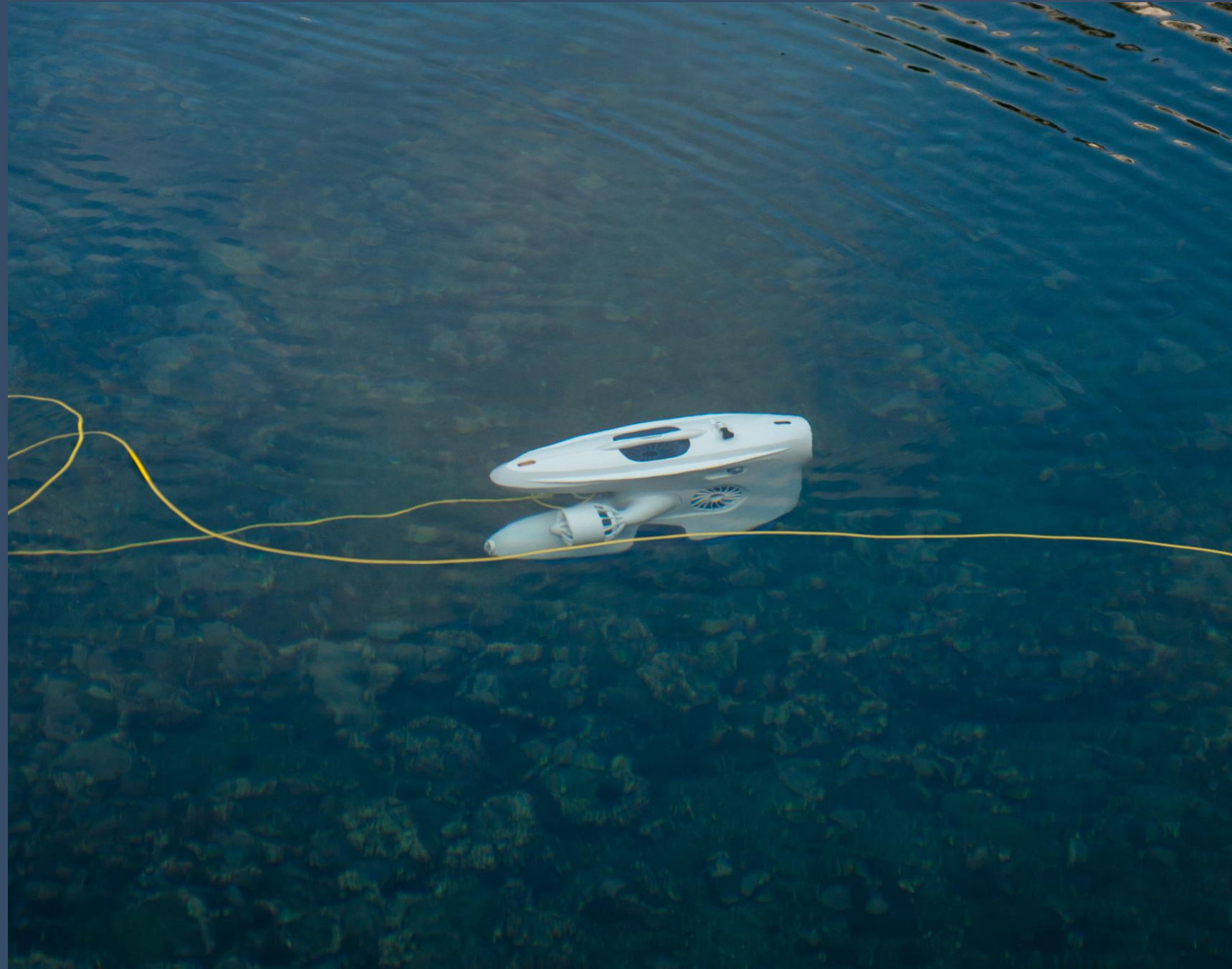
Underwater Drone

We used a Blueye Pioneer underwater drone to explore the underwater world of Norway in Tranøya on 29 March.

As the drone dropped below the surface, we discovered the jetty covered in life with tunicates, mussels, and soft corals

Heading deeper and onto the sandy sea floor, we found hermit crabs, sand dollars, ctenophores, and much more!

View the highlights from our underwater drone footage [on YouTube](#)







Wildlife List — Birds





Wildlife List – Seabirds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Morus bassanus</i>	northern gannet	Basstölpel	fou de bassan
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	great cormorant	Kormoran	grand cormoran
<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	European shag	Krähenscharbe	cormoran huppé
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	European herring gull	Silbermöwe	goéland argenté
<i>Larus marinus</i>	great black-backed gull	Mantelmöwe	goéland marin
<i>Larus fuscus</i>	lesser black-backed gull	Heringsmöwe	goéland brun
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	black-legged kittiwake	Dreizehenmöwe	mouette tridactyle
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	northern fulmar	Eissturmvogel	fulmar boréal
<i>Uria aalge</i>	common guillemot (common murre)	Trottellumme	guillemot marmette
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	black guillemot	Gryllteiste	guillemot à miroir

Wildlife List – Shore Birds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	grey heron	Graureiher	héron cendré
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	mute swan	Höckerschwan	hygne tuberculé
<i>Anser anser</i>	greylag goose	Graugans	oie cendrée
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	mallard	Stockente	canard colvert
<i>Mergus serrator</i>	red-breasted merganser	Mittelsäger	harle huppé
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	common eider	Eiderente	eider à duvet
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	long-tailed duck	Eisente	harelde kakawi
<i>Gavia immer</i>	great northern diver (common loon)	Eistaucher	plongeon huard
<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Eurasian oyster catcher	Austenfischer	huïtrier
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	common redshank	Rotschenkel	chevalier gambette
<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Eurasian curlew	Großer Brachvogel	courlis cendré

Wildlife List – Land birds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	White-tailed Eagle	Seeadler	Pygargue à queue blanche
<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Golden Eagle	Steinadler	Aigle royal
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Eurasian (Common) Kestrel	Turmfalke	Faucon crécerelle
<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Hooded Crow	Nebelkrähe	Corneille mantelée
<i>Pica pica</i>	Eurasian Magpie	Elster	Pie bavarde
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Northern (Common) Raven	Kolkrabe	Grand Corbeau
<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	Western (Eurasian) Jackdaw	Dohle	Choucas des tours
<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Rook	Saatkrähe	Corbeau freux
<i>Columba livia domestica</i>	Feral Pigeon	Stadttaube	Pigeon domestique
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Common Wood Pigeon	Ringeltaube	Pigeon ramier
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Eurasian Collared Dove	Türkentaube	Tourterelle turque

Wildlife List – Land Birds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	Eurasian rock pipit	Strandpieper	pipit maritime
<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	pied wagtail	Trauerbachstelze	bergeronnette de yarrell
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	European robin	Rotkehlchen	rougegorge familier
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	house sparrow	Haussperling	moineau domestique
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Eurasian (common) blackbird	Amsel	merle noir
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Eurasian wren	Zaunkönig	troglodyte mignon
<i>Parus major</i>	great tit	Kohlmeise	mésange charbonnière
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	European starling	Gemeiner Star	étourneau sansonnet
<i>Chloris chloris</i>	European greenfinch	Grünfink	verdier d'Europe

SPNOR2632 # MS Spitsbergen - Tromsø to Glasgow - 28th March to 7th April - eBird Trip Report

28 Mar – 7 Apr 2026 (11 days)

Public

Norway | United Kingdom Subregions

Kieren De'ath, Pauletta Brown

Share Edit



Narrative

Owners and editors of a Trip Report may write a narrative.

Add narrative

DATA FOR: Group (all people)

46
Species Observed
+3 other taxa

21
Checklists

eBird

During our wildlife watches, our Ornithologist, Kieren, conducted detailed bird surveys, recording observations for the Citizen Science platform eBird. We recorded 46 different species of birds in 21 checklists.

This initiative helps contribute valuable data to global bird conservation efforts, enhancing scientific understanding of bird populations and their habitats.

View our data on our [e-Bird trip report](#)



White-Tailed Eagles of the North

We are always thrilled to catch sight of the white-tailed eagle, one of Norway's iconic birds.

Once considered endangered and locally extinct in some areas, conservation efforts have helped this species make a remarkable recovery in Norway.

Whether you spotted it on land, from the expedition boats, or during the eagle safari in Svolvær, we hope you caught a glimpse of this incredible master of the skies.

Wildlife List — Mammals



Wildlife List – Mammals



SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	harbour porpoise	Gewöhnlicher Schweinswal	marsouin commun
<i>Delphinus delphis</i>	common dolphin	Gemeiner Delfin	dauphin commun
<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	harbour seal, common seal	Seehund	phoque commun
<i>Alces alces</i>	moose	Elch	élan

A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and yellow, dancing over a dark mountain range and a body of water. The sky is filled with stars. Overlaid on the right side of the image is the word 'THX' in large, semi-transparent, green, serif capital letters. The text 'Thank you for your participation!' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the lower right portion of the 'THX' letters.

**Thank you for your
participation!**