

Arctic and Sub Arctic Wildlife.

At the October meeting of the Blyth Valley and Southwold Suffolk Wildlife Trust group, the photographer Liz Cutting treated us to a visual tour of Svalbard and Iceland's summer flora and fauna. The Arctic region of Svalbard has varied habitats of bog, rocks and cliffs, and is home to an amazing variety of wildlife. The flora is small and low-growing, but gives a beautiful carpet of colour in June, providing food for the smaller Svalbard reindeer to be found there. On land, the wildlife guide scouts ahead of the visiting group to check for the presence of polar bears: the area is carefully controlled for visitor and animal welfare and safety, but he is permitted to carry a rifle in case of emergency. Liz' stunning photographs brought out the range and beauty of the birds, from Arctic Terns and Skuas to Ptarmigan and King Eiders, to name but a few. One worrying photograph showed a polar bear carrying a plastic bottle, which thankfully it later dropped.

In Iceland, it was interesting to see Snow Buntings in their summer breeding plumage. Liz was able to take clear photos of the protected Red Necked Phalarope – and the swarms of flies and insects on which they feed!



The landscape provided many contrasts, from the incredible colours and shapes of drifting, melting ice formations on the water, to the wild lupins on land, introduced to help stabilise the earth. These look beautiful, but they've become invasive, and something of a problem now.

The exceptional quality of the photographs gave us a real feel for this remote region, and it was enjoyed by all.

Our next meeting is on Thursday, November 10th, at 7.30pm in the Southwold Arts Centre, IP18 6JP. Steve Aylward, Head of Property and Projects for the SWT, will give an illustrated talk on the Butterflies found on our reserves. Entry costs £3, (rising to £4 in January) to include refreshments, free for under 25's. All are welcome.

Penny Mansfield

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