

# **Circumnavigation of Nordaustlandet, Svalbard aboard SY Jonathan IV**

*July 10<sup>th</sup>-August 4<sup>th</sup> 2010*

**With Nigel Winn and Island Expeditions**

## **Itinerary**

Island Expeditions will be chartering the newly refitted (2009) expedition yacht Jonathan Livingstone with owner/skipper Mark Van de Wegg for a twenty-five day circumnavigation of Nordaustlandet in the archipelago of Svalbard. This voyage follows on from our very successful voyage during July/August 2008 when we circumnavigated the main island of Spitsbergen on SY Jonathan 111.

The trip is primarily aimed at the serious wildlife photographer where there will be unparalleled opportunities afforded for photography which are not available on the larger expedition cruise ships. We will have the advantage of flexibility and stealth working with a small group and shall take maximum advantage of light conditions and sightings as they occur and as weather conditions dictate. This is the realm of the Ice Bear king of the Arctic and to see and photograph this impressive predator in this wild and remote region of Svalbard is our ultimate aim and as we head further north our chances of fantastic opportunities are greatly increased. Watching a polar bear hunting along the ice flows or resting on a floating Iceberg is a dream for most wildlife photographers and on this trip we aim to achieve this dream and once found we will be under no pressure to move on to the next location. Walrus are also top of the agenda and we will be visiting haulout sites and also our chances of bumping into this huge animal resting on Ice flows are very high. We also plan to undertake several hikes inland in search of rare species like Ivory and Sabine's gull and also stopping at a number of locations to photograph the huge seabird colonies like Little Auks and Brunnich Guillemots. There will also be lots to offer anyone with other interests like Botany, Geology, hiking and Human History. It is planned to take two guides and two crew- members giving a total ratio of one staff per two clients. This will also mean that we can split the group when the occasion arises and offer an alternative programme. We also aim to have several photographic workshops available throughout the trip for those wishing to learn more and improve techniques.

The itinerary will be largely determined by the ice conditions at the time and we shall be monitoring this closely as we progress into the higher latitudes. In the event of a circumnavigation not being possible due to heavy ice then we shall follow an alternative route that will be decided at the time. It is also more than likely that we shall have to alter our plans from time to time due to the presence of Polar Bears in areas that we planned to walk.

*Among the places we hope to visit are:*

**Diabasodden, Isfjorden:**

Weather permitting we shall schedule a short stop at the Diabas cliffs either on the outward or return leg to Longyearbyen. It is underneath these low level cliffs that there will be a good opportunity to photograph the larger arctic sub-species of Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica naumanii*).

**Billefjorden**

Beautiful fjord with a chance to photograph Long-tailed Skua, Barnacle Geese and Arctic Flowers and a planned excursion to travel amongst a glacier looking for Bearded Seals, Ringed Seals and Arctic Terns.

**Poolepynten, Prins Karls Forland:**

Poolepynten in the Forlandsundet usually holds good numbers of Walrus. It is a major haul out for non-breeders containing mainly males. Scientists regularly monitor this colony from an observation camera and nearby hut and it is an excellent site for photography both in the water and on land. The animals here are more use to a human presence than other sites in the archipelago.

**Fugelhuken, Prins Karls Forland:**

This area of Prins Karls Forland has great landscapes and tundra with a large seabird colony at the Huken. This is the site where Willem Barents set foot on Spitsbergen in 1596.

**14<sup>th</sup> July Bay, Krossfjorden:**

There is a low and very accessible colony at the entrance to 14<sup>th</sup> July Bay with amongst other species breeding Puffins, Barnacle Geese, Glaucous Gull and Razorbill (rare in Svalbard). There are also great views of both glacier face and surrounding ice flows where Bearded seals generally haul out and Kittiwakes, Arctic terns and Black Guillemots forage among the "growers". While in this area we hope to locate an Arctic Fox den and this will offer a great chance to photograph adults feeding young cubs and also the cubs playing.

**Once we have reached this area our chances of finding polar bears greatly increases and we will be maximising our potential to great affect and hopefully we will find large males and also females with dependant cubs. The photographic opportunities are amazing in this wild terrain and to meet the Ice Bear will be our main aim.**

#### **Ytre and Indre Norskøya:**

Indre Norskøya has a vast and very accessible colony of Little Auks and the snow- clad mountains offer a great backdrop. On Ytre Norskøya, which was formerly a lookout point for whalers there is a small but interesting seabird colony and the remains of many graves.

#### **Andøyane & Makeøyane, Liefdefjorden:**

These two islands are very good for tundra and arctic flowers. The lakes hold King Eider, Grey Phalarope, Red-throated Diver, Long-tailed Duck, Brent and Pink-footed Geese and many Arctic terns.

#### **Mushamna, Woodfjorden:**

Mushamna has a huge Arctic tern colony and breeding Pink-footed Geese.

#### **Lagøya:**

Lagøya has fossil beaches and great tundra walks. There are two sites for Walrus on the island, one of which is at Purchasneset. This colony is regularly monitored and a fixed camera has been installed to study their behaviour. This is also one of the very few locations in Svalbard where Sabine's Gulls have bred.

#### **Waldenøya:**

This is a small island with good numbers of seabirds including Puffins.

#### **Phippsøya, Sjuøyane:**

There will be another opportunity to see Walrus that often haul out on the shore near the trappers hut. There will also be an option to undertake a hike up on the plateau to view nesting Ivory Gulls.

#### **Wordiebukta, Rijpfjorden:**

We shall explore the area around the old German weather station at Wordiebukta at the head of the Rijpfjorden.

**Duvefjorden:**

Duvefjorden is very rarely visited and we shall spend two days in the area. There will be an option to go hiking in search of Ivory Gulls in this area.

**Kapp Laura and Salisbury Plain:**

We shall explore the tundra and small lakes of this remote plain that is encircled by the Austfonna glacier.

**Storøya:**

Sabine's gull has recently bred here and there is also a Walrus rookery on the north side of the island.

**Kvitøya:**

Kvitøya holds the largest Walrus rookery in Svalbard (500+) at Kraenerpynten. There is also a memorial cairn to Andree and his companions who crashed on the pack ice in 1897.

**Isispynten:**

If time permits we shall visit Isispynten now an island. This is the only piece of land between Vibebukta in Hinlopenstretet and Sormarka at the north-east corner of the huge Austfonna glacier.

**Palanderbukta:**

Palanderbukta has a small Walrus rookery (40+) and offers one of the best chances to see breeding Ivory Gulls and great chance to photograph breeding black guillemot.

**Wahlenbergfjorden:**

We shall enter the narrow yet secluded anchorage of Kloverbladbukta at the head of the Wahlenbergfjorden. There will be an option to hike to an Ivory gull colony. The lunar landscapes here surrounding the Branevatnet are stunning and offer great photographic opportunities. We also intend to cruise the face of the Etonbreen glacier. This fjord is very remote and few visitors to Svalbard get to see this beautiful location.

**Alkejellet, Hinlopenstretet:**

These Spectacular basalt cliffs hold 120k+ pairs of Brunnichs Guillemot and also Kittiwakes. There is always a good chance of seeing an Arctic fox scavenging under these cliffs.

**Murchisonfjorden:**

Fantastic chance of meeting polar bears and walrus. We shall explore the islands of the Murchisonfjorden including Krossøya with its Pomor cross and high density of breeding waders and Eider.