



The exquisite properties of eiderdown – When scrutinised under a microscope, eiderdown reveals the secrets that have made it the most valuable down on the planet. In contrast to a feather's neatly arranged barbs stemming from a solid shaft, eiderdown's soft fibres branch out randomly from a single point, twisting around each other. Each fibre has small hooks which allow the down to cling to itself, trapping air and heat, leading to extraordinary insulation. Wealthy Vikings of old would stuff their bedding with it; not much has changed since.



How Razorbills avoid throwing a strop – A group of Razorbills is collectively known as a 'strop.' How does this robust Atlantic seabird avoid actually losing its temper with fellow seabirds? One way is by not fighting for food. Razorbills, guillemots and puffins do not compete directly with each other for fish. A time old arrangement sees guillemots catching large fish, puffins catching small fish and Razorbills gunning for everything else in between.



The humpback whale's unique flipper – How do humpbacks turn and dive with such agility while being bigger and heavier than a bus? It's all in the flippers. Unlike most whales, which have flippers with smooth leading edges, humpbacks have uniquely large bumps on theirs. These create turbulence that provides added lift and reduced drag at high angles, giving these giant creatures surprising agility. Engineers are borrowing this concept to modify water turbines, windmills and boat rudders.



Wildlife in the land of ice and fire

Iceland's long summer days, mineral-rich waters and fertile coastal cliffs attract a wonderful mix of sea mammals and birdlife waiting to be encountered.

'Sea parrots' of the Atlantic
Iceland provides sanctuary to 60% of the world's Atlantic Puffin population during the summer months – that's anything between 8 to 10 million puffins. Nicknamed "Sea Parrots" because of their tropical coloured beaks, their penguin-like coat and oh-so-adorable ambling gait have made them the signature Icelandic bird for many.

The Westmann islands, provide a habitat for countless birds including puffins. The coastal cliffs of

Bakkagerði and northerly Grímsey also have large puffin colonies. Here you'll be able to see the birds splash, waddle, flap and tumble in their natural habitat. Heaven!

Whale, hello there
You'll have opportunities to spot various whale species all around Iceland's coast. Around 23 species have been spotted here, including humpback, white-beaked dolphin, minke, harbour porpoise, and, if you're lucky, the mighty blue whale.

Despite humpback whales getting all the attention because of their playful antics, minke whales are the most common whale species found in Iceland's waters. Minkes can be curious creatures and are known for approaching ships, even keeping pace with moving vessels at times.