

**MIDCONFERENS TOUR, WEDNESDAY 12. SEPT 2018**

**Snæfellsnes and Borgarfjörður, West-Iceland**

Pick up at Hilton hotel. Departure at 8:30 am.

The trip will take participants through the lowlands of western Iceland to the small fishing town of Stykkishólmur, located on the north side of Snæfellsnes Peninsula. We will travel through landscape characterised by farming, grasslands and peatlands along with traversing through some Holocene lava fields with craters. On the way we will discuss current and historical use of wetlands, including drainage and their restoration. Revegetation areas will be observed and methods used in reclamation discussed, including the use of the invasive species Nootka lupine (*Lupinus nootkatensis*). In Stykkishólmur, we will observe a management project run by the municipality with the purpose of controlling the distribution and spread of lupine. Breiðafjörður Bay is the home of the White-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), a species that was close to becoming extinct early last century. On-going restoration of the species will be discussed. The trip may include some short walks, depending on weather conditions. Warm clothes, rain and wind-tight and good shoes are required for this trip. Pack lunch provided.

**MIDCONFERENS TOUR, WEDNESDAY 12. SEPT 2018**

**Langjökull glacier and the southern interior desert**

Pick up at Hilton hotel. Departure at 8:30 am.

The trip will take participants through the southern lowlands, which is an important agricultural area. Fertile Andosols, including extensive wetlands that have largely been drained for agricultural purposes, cover the South. Participants will enter the southern highland desert area (human-induced desertification in a humid climate) and approach the margin of the vast Langjökull glacier. Large-scale revegetation will be observed, afforestation efforts and controversial use of invasive introduced species. Natural and human history and volcanology will be discussed along the route. The trip takes participants to the famous Geysir hot spring area and Gullfoss (the Golden Waterfall). A 2 hr hike to Hagavatn, south of Langjökull glacier is expected, pending on weather conditions. Warm clothes, rain and wind-tight and good shoes are required for this trip (plan on **4.5 km/ 3 mile walk**, up 120 m high hill, rough gravel path, highland, windy and 6°C (10°F) colder than in Reykjavik). Limited/no toilet facilities at Hagavatn area. Pack lunch provided.

## **MIDCONFERENS TOUR, WEDNESDAY 12. SEPT 2018**

### **Hekla forests – large scale restoration of native birch woodland**

Pick up at Hilton hotel. Departure at 8:30 am.

This excursion focuses on Hekluslógar (Heklaforests); a large scale restoration project initiated in 2007. The project aims to restore at least 600 km<sup>2</sup> of native birch woodlands and shrubland on degraded land. Its goal is to increase ecosystem resilience around Mt. Hekla to disturbance by tephra from volcanic eruptions. The trip will take participants through the southern lowlands with fertile agricultural areas and through the valley of Þjórsárdalur, where a prosperous farming community was largely devastated by volcanic tephra during a major eruption in the volcano Mt. Hekla in 1104 AD. En route, a variety of land-uses can be observed, from traditional sheep and cattle farms to exotic conifer plantations and hydropower stations. Driving through extensive areas affected by tephra from Mt. Hekla, the participants will learn about the challenges posed by volcanic activity and soil erosion and observe different restoration approaches. These include the planting of woodland islets in combination with soil stabilization interventions to overcome seed and microsite limitations to spontaneous succession. Some research sites will also be visited for discussions about research needs and knowledge transfer in large-scale restoration. Before heading back to Reykjavík, there will be a stop at the Soil Conservation Service headquarters in Gunnarsholt. The trip may include some short hikes, depending on weather conditions. Warm clothes, rain and wind-tight and good shoes are therefore required. Pack lunch provided.

## **MIDCONFERENS TOUR, WEDNESDAY 12. SEPT 2018**

### **Reykjanes peninsula**

Pick up at Hilton hotel. Departure at 9:00 am.

The tour will take participants to geothermal power station at Hellisheiði, where we will visit sites of ecological restoration of disturbed areas, such as the moss communities and grasslands which are characteristic of the area. We will then drive to village Þorlákshöfn, visiting sand dune areas and large scale restoration projects. We will drive west along the coastline the Reykjanes Peninsula, an area rich in history of land use and geology, visiting Selvogur and Krýsuvík for discussions on issues like the effects of ecosystem collapse on society and restoration activities. Then we will turn north to stop at Seltún, a spectacular gem of geothermal activity giving a fit background for discussing both views on harnessing of the power of Earth and the impact of growing tourism at highly vulnerable areas. The Kleifarvatn lake area is unique and the lavafields along the road crossing the Reykjanes Peninsula, the youngest being 700 years old, illustrate once again the volcanic nature of Iceland and the links between land use and ecosystem condition and recovery. The tour will be a living example of Icelandic history, land degradation, land restoration and the controversial use of alien species and their impact on Icelandic nature. The trip will include some short hikes. Warm clothes, rain and wind-tight, and good shoes are required for this trip. Pack lunch and light refreshments provided. Return at Hilton hotel ca. 16:00 pm.

### **MIDCONFERENS TOUR, WEDNESDAY 12. SEPT 2018**

#### **Reykjadalur - Sustainable footpaths and footpath management**

Pick up at Hilton hotel. Departure at 9:00 am.

The increase in tourism in Iceland in recent years has few parallels in the world. Nature is the main attraction but in very few places are adequate conditions to accommodate large groups of tourists, year round. To protect the nature, infrastructure has been built but the outcome is mixed and the purpose is not always achieved. Unsuccessful infrastructure can cause greater stress and damage to nature sites, sometimes irreversible.

This tour will focus on habitat restoration and the need for nature first policy for tourism infrastructure. Also, the role of sustainable footpaths and contemplated design of viewpoint's in land and vegetation protection. It starts with a visit to Hellisheiði geothermal power plant and a presentation on moss restoration. From there a three-hour hike through geothermal sites and along the warm river in Reykjadalur valley. The hike offers ample opportunities to observe and discuss the ups and down of sustainable footpath management and habitat restoration in Iceland. Warm clothes, rain and wind-tight and good shoes are required for this trip. Pack lunch provided.

### **MIDCONFERENS TOUR, WEDNESDAY 12. SEPT 2018**

#### **Reykjavik city walk**

Meeting at Hilton hotel 10:00 am.

The participants will go together by bus to the Vatnsmýri wetland reserve of Reykjavík (bus fare from the conference hotel to Vatnsmýri included). The reserve is a reclaimed part of a previously extensive wetland area and is home to rich birdlife. It is also close to the first settlement in downtown Reykjavík, where our walk will end, with an option of visiting the *Settlement Exhibition Reykjavík 871 +/- 2* (entrance fee not included). There you can both explore remains of a hall from the Settlement Age (930–1000) and remnants of human settlement that are clearly older than the generally considered earliest time of settlement in Iceland.

Our walk to downtown Reykjavík, we will explore some of the older neighbourhoods in Reykjavik, which will give us good opportunity to compare them to contemporary city planning. Note that the tour ends in downtown Reykjavik. Warm clothes, rain and wind-tight and good shoes recommended for this trip.