

The Iceland gull

We are sailing under the steep mountain side. The mountain descends almost vertical to the sea. We are lucky with the weather, so the small boat can go up close to the rocks.

The rocks appear almost completely naked and only sporadic covered with lichen, but in many cracks and folds of the mountain smaller shrubs of willow and herbs like angelica grow. The fresh green angelica can get any Inuit to risk health and climb over the steep mountain side to grab an important contribution to the traditional Greenlandic food.

Above us, the sky is alive. Hundreds of white gulls are circling, while they are screaming loudly.

Not far up on some very narrow rock ledge, there is life: A gull screams while it is keeping a watchful eye on the intruders in the boat. What can the intruders make up? When we take a closer look, we better understand the concern of the gull. Around on the small rock ledge three

small grey-brown young gulls are walking around.

In early July the Iceland gulls (*Larus glaucoides*) with the Greenlandic name Naajaannaq have hatch out the eggs. Now starts a difficult time. The young gulls must be defended on the narrow cliff ledges, and the adult gulls must forage out on the fjord.

The young gulls and the adult birds feed on fish, crustaceans, mussels and on carrion. The gulls are fishing at sea shores or plummet in shallow water. In the town the Iceland gull is foraging with other species of gulls at garbage dumps, sewage outlets and places where fish and shrimp are cleaned and reloaded.

The Iceland gull looks like the glaucous gull (*Larus hyperboreus*). But an essential characteristic is that where the Iceland gulls during the breeding season has a small red ring around the eye, the glaucous gull with the Greenlandic name Naajarujuusuaq has a yellow or pink ring.



The adult Iceland gull and young gulls on the rockledge , July 2010