

Icelandic Peatlands

characteristics and conditions

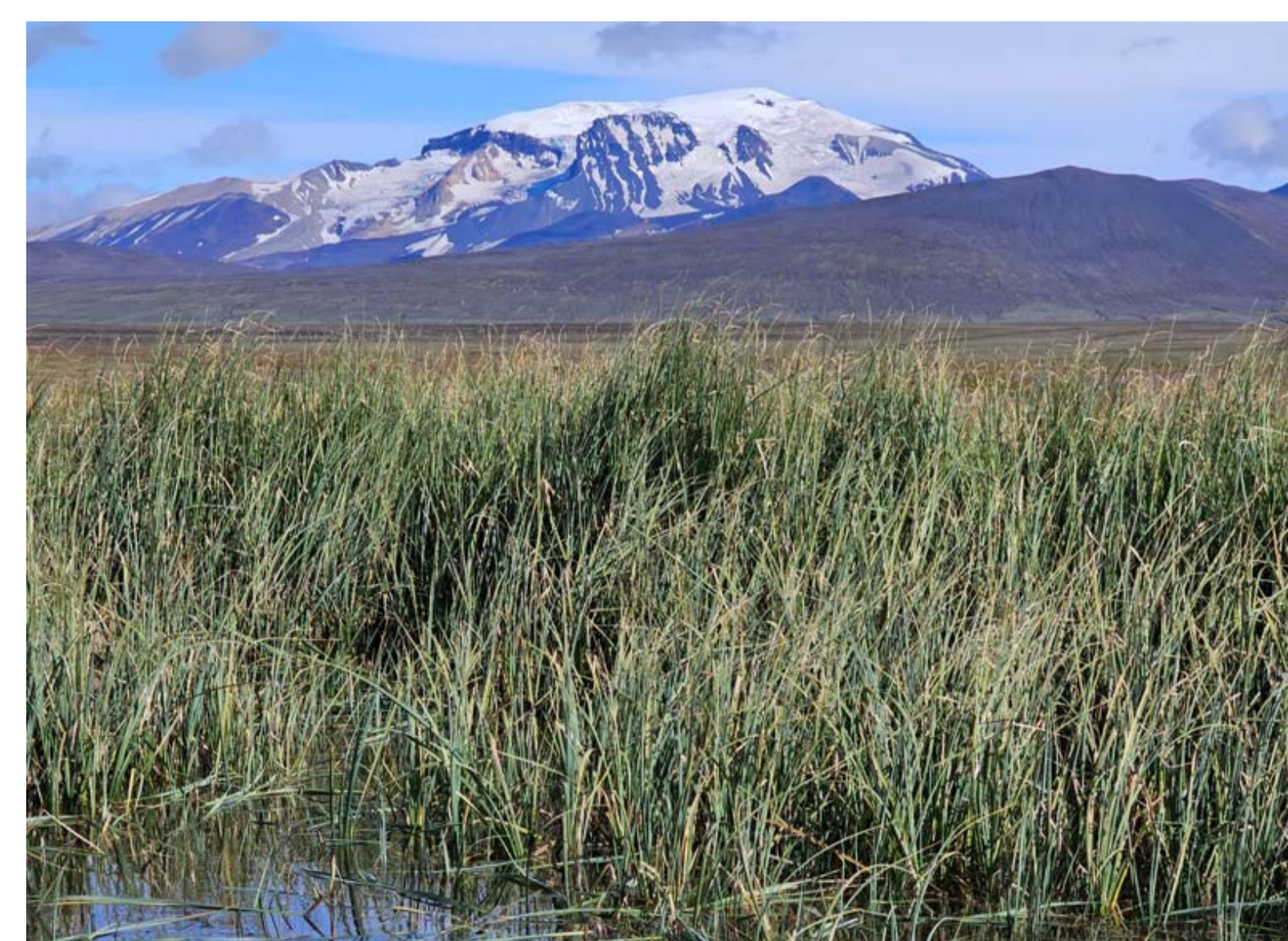
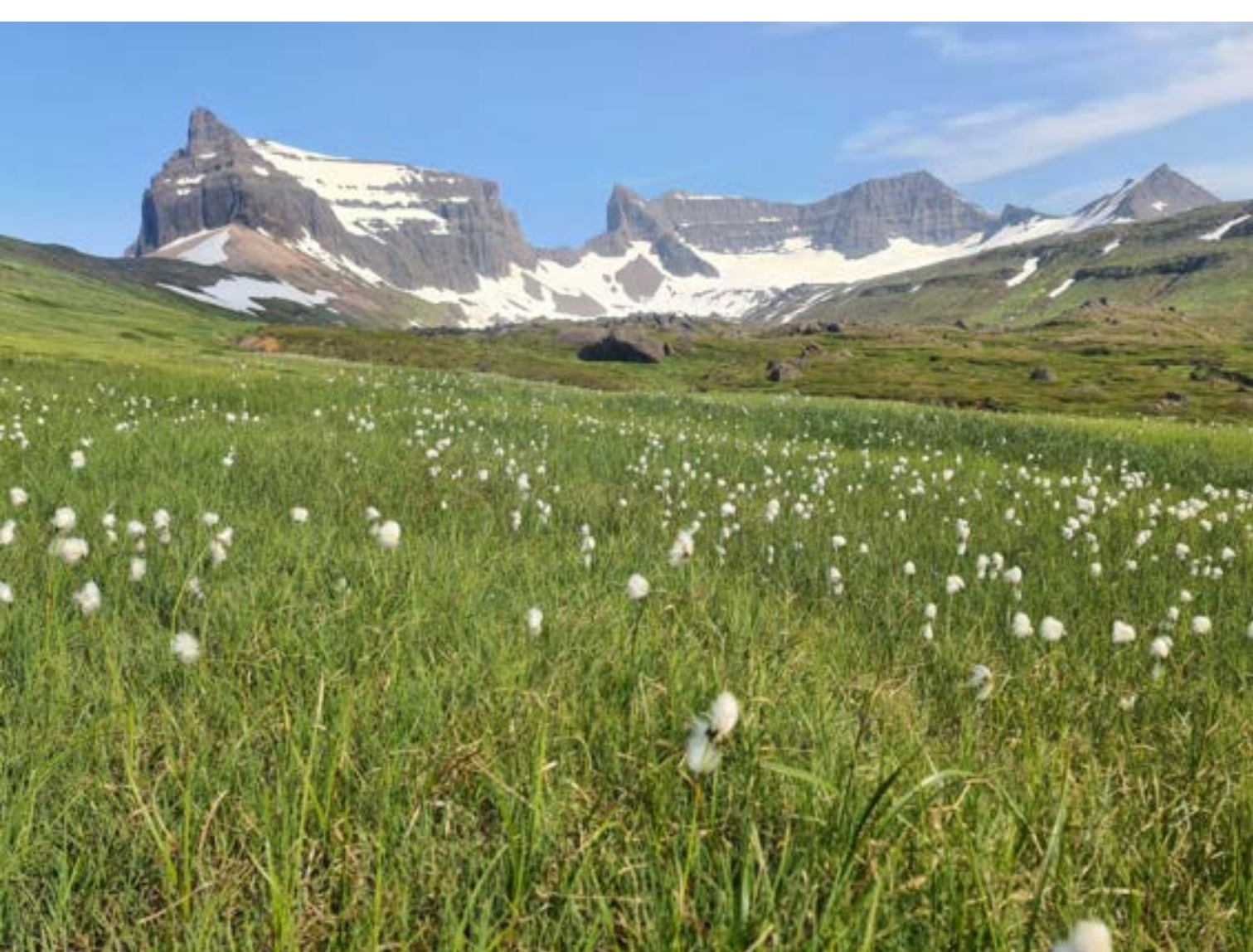
Relatively short history of drainage (1950's)

In some lowland areas up to 90% of peatlands are impacted by drainage

Peatlands

Drainage

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High mineral inputs → favourable nutrient availability → high productivity → high bird breeding density

Vegetation is characterized by predominance of vascular plants



Soil organic matter greatly reduced by oxidation in the **upper part** of the soil profile. Lighter in colour from aeolian inputs because of soil erosion after settlement

Tephra layer from the 1600's. The ash has fallen on hummocks and settled in pockets of mineral matter

The settlement tephra layer (estim. 870)

Lower part of the profile is darker and more organic with especially high organic content in the water saturated part of the soil



Sphagnum moss dominated peatlands are virtually absent

Particularly important habitats for birds



Support many internationally significant bird species, especially waders in the northern hemisphere



Drained peatland

Hella soil profile close to the volcanic belt