

TROPICAL BIRDING **THE FALKLAND ISLANDS, SOUTH GEORGIA, AND ANTARCTICA****31 January – 18 February 2015***On board the Akademik Ioffe***Report and photos by Nick Athanas**

A cruise like this is for most people a one in a lifetime experience, and it easily lived up to all the hype. It was a dream come true for all nature lovers and wildlife photographers, and I've never been anywhere else where you could get so close to such an amazing abundance of wildlife. Most of the birds and other animals were totally unafraid of people, and often would quite literally walk up to you and check you out. The stark mountains, immense glaciers, and towering icebergs provided a breathtaking backdrop to the wildlife show, and the sheer scenic beauty took us all by surprise. We were fortunate to have terrific weather that allowed us to land at nearly all the planned locations (and all the essential ones), and gave us unusually calm seas throughout the voyage. The trip was expertly operated by One Ocean Expeditions, and their experienced and knowledgeable staff and guides helped make for a truly unforgettable journey

through the southern ocean. I'd like to thank the Expedition Leader Boris Wise, not only for his endless enthusiasm and expansive understanding about all aspects of the region, but also for setting the framework for a smooth, safe, and fun trip. The staff ornithologists and mammologists, Steve Bailey and Dick Filby, were always on hand to look for and help ID seabirds and cetaceans, and they freely shared their seemingly bottomless knowledge on the wildlife and many other subjects. While I only mentioned a few, all of the 20 other staff members, which included geologists, historians, chefs, bartenders, and even a masseuse, were excellent and contributed to our enjoyment. The ship's 43 Russian crew also worked very hard, mostly behind the scenes, and the trip would have been impossible without them.



The Akademik Ioffe, our home for the tour, at anchor near Brown Bluff in Antarctica

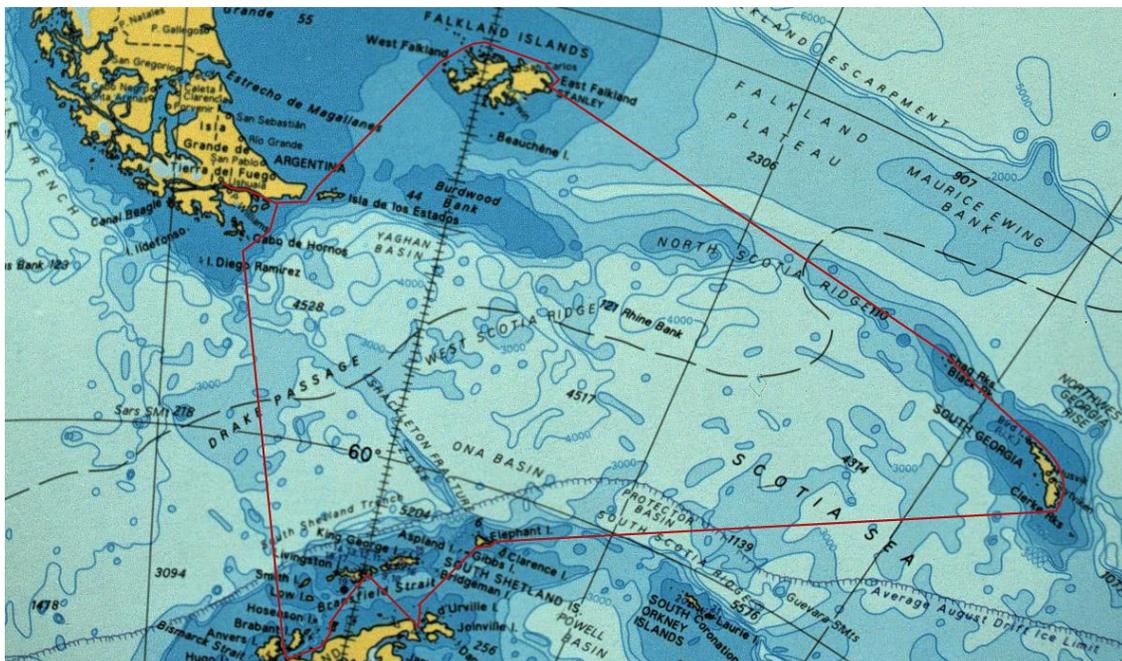


Chart of our voyage, courtesy of One Ocean Expeditions

31 January: The Argentine city of Ushuaia is the world's southernmost city, and served as both the start and end port for our journey. Some of the group joined me for a pre-cruise extension that visited areas near the city as well as farther afield in Tierra del Fuego – I give a short summary at the end of the main report. By late morning, we had all gathered in our hotel, and had a leisurely walk along the waterfront of Ushuaia toward the port. Kelp Geese foraged along the rocky shore, and an old shipwreck had been reclaimed by a colony of South American Terns. We spent time watching and photographing them (photo below) as they wheeled and screeched overhead along with some Kelp and Dolphin Gulls.



As there were still a couple hours until we had to get to the meeting point, we enjoyed a long and leisurely lunch, and the waitress wasn't even surprised when half the group got up to photograph a really friendly Southern Lapwing through the window. Finally the time had come! We walked the last few blocks, met up with the expedition staff, and after handing in our passports we were soon on a bus heading across the street to the pier, and then up the gangway and onto the *loff*. There was some time to unpack and get to know our new home, and a short welcome reception, before the lines were finally thrown and our journey had truly begun. As we pulled away from the dock and headed out into the Beagle Channel, Imperial Cormorants and Chilean Skuas started to appear in numbers. Soon the alarm sounded and we had a mandatory safety and lifeboat drill – after peering into those tiny orange shells, we fervently hoped we would never again see the inside of them, but it was nice to know they were there. Dinner was an extended affair, and with daylight dwindling, some of us left early to enjoy the last bit of daylight as we cruised the Beagle Channel. Numerous Magellanic Penguins lined the shore of an island, while we had our first views of Black-browed Albatross and Southern Giant-Petrel. A few Peale's Dolphins splashed briefly near the bow, but we would see them much better later in the trip. A single distant diving-petrel remained unidentified. It could have been a Magellanic, which has become scarce in the Beagle in recent years. Soon it was too dark to see, but we stayed up to see the Ushuaia pilot depart the ship on a dangerous-looking rope ladder, but safely reached the awaiting boat that whisked him off into the night.

1 February: By the time we awoke, the ship had steamed all the way around Tierra del Fuego and was almost through the Lemaire Strait, heading out into open ocean; we would spend the rest of the day and that night at sea crossing to the Falklands. Swarms of Sooty Shearwaters were joined by a flock of Cape Petrels that circled the ship a few times. A Buff-winged Cinclodes took shelter on the ship for a while, but eventually took off in the direction of Tierra del Fuego. We continued to pick out seabirds throughout the early morning including our first Southern Royal Albatrosses, White-chinned Petrels, Greater Shearwaters, Slender-billed Prions, Wilson's Storm-Petrels, Gray-backed Storm-Petrels, and a lone Common Diving-Petrel. A few Northern Giant-Petrels were found among the larger numbers of Southern, and that was all before breakfast! Later in the morning, some time was spent on learning Zodiac procedures and sorting out our gear, but there was plenty of time to watch the seas as a steady stream of birds came and went, though nothing different from the morning. Many regularly followed the ship for long periods of time, and some of us headed down to the stern to get some better shots. The afternoon was all about dolphins, and we had a very memorable experience with a pod of Hourglass Dolphins that were uncharacteristically leaping almost totally out of the water and playfully riding the bow. Small groups of Peale's Dolphins also came in and toyed with the ship a few times. Leaning over the side of the ship and looking under the bow became a very popular pastime for many of the passengers, and that would continue over the next few days.



Southern Royal Albatross



Slender-billed Prion



Both Northern (left) and Southern (right) Giant Petrels were seen as we traveled to the Falklands



An Hourglass Dolphin breaches during our transit to the Falklands.



2 February: The Falklands were coming into view as we arose next morning in time to see one of the Russian sailors raise the British courtesy flag. Soon after, waves of Common Diving-Petrels started flying low in front of the ship, joining the ever-present Slender-billed Prions and Black-browed Albatrosses. Before breakfast, we passed through the “Wooly Gut”, a narrow straight between West Point Island and West Falkland, renowned for its wicked tidal currents. Wind was a bit of a worry, but it died down as we entered the harbor of West Point, and we enjoyed a spectacular calm, warm, and sunny day. After a short Zodiac ride to shore, we walked about a mile to the west side of the island (Land Rovers were available for those who didn’t fancy the hike), spotting some Correndera Pipits along the way. At the end of the track, a short, muddy trail took us down into paradise, where we got right next to a very active colony of Black-browed Albatrosses

and Rockhopper Penguins, both species nesting side-by-side and showing absolutely no fear of humans. The expedition staff had given guidelines to stay at least five meters from the birds, but clearly the penguins and albatrosses didn’t get the message. Albatrosses frequently landed right next to us and waddled past looking up curiously. Penguins strutted around wherever they wanted, and we quite literally had to watch where we put our feet! I have to admit I was blown away – I didn’t expect this sort of experience until South Georgia, and it was truly one of my favorite spots of the whole trip. Like everyone else I went crazy with the camera, but also took some time just watching and taking it all in. We also saw our first Striated Caracaras, but would see more later in the day. Before heading back to the ship, we spent time on the beach with some photogenic Kelp Geese and Crested Ducks, and a small flock Ruddy-headed Geese was hiding behind an old building next to a shipwreck.





Nuptial display of a pair of Black-browed Albatrosses at West Point Island



It was really neat watching parent Black-browed Albatrosses interacting with their chicks.



Rockhopper Penguins at West Point Island



Rockhopper Penguin tending chick



A pair of Kelp Geese at West Point

After lunch and a short cruise, we anchored near Carcass Island and went ashore again for amazingly warm afternoon that saw us stripping down to t-shirts. Carcass is free of rats, and absolutely teems with birds. After a quick walk along the rocky shoreline, we had already seen many endemic Cobb's Wrens, lots of curious Blackish Cinclodes, both Blackish and Magellanic Oystercatchers, hordes of Falkland Steamer-Ducks, nesting Magellanic Penguins, and a stunning White-bidled Finch. After that we all spread out and enjoyed this amazing place. The late afternoon light was great for photography, and we almost had to be dragged back to the ship! Many of the other passengers took advantage of the famous tea and scones served by the lodge on the island, but with so little time and such amazing conditions, food was the last thing on our minds. This was a really special place and I wish we had had more time.



Cobb's Wren (left), endemic to the Falklands, and Blackish Cinclodes (right), sometimes called Tussockbird - both from Carcass Islands



Striated Caracara from Carcass Island – they are common and inquisitive here. The locals call them “Johnny Rook”.



Magellanic Penguin at Carcass Island

3 February: Stanley is the capital of the Falklands, and home to about two-thirds of the 3,000 people who live on the archipelago. We tied up to a floating dock on the outskirts of this small town, and took a bus out to a nearby nature reserve called Gypsy Cove. While it couldn't really compare to the previous day in terms of the wildlife spectacle, we enjoyed a pleasant walk along the trail and saw some nice things like nesting Magellanic Cormorants (Rock Shags) and Black-crowned Night-Herons along with Long-tailed Meadowlark, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant, White-rumped Sandpiper, Two-banded Plover, Sedge Wren, and more White-bridled Finches and Black-chinned Siskins. One the way back to town, we stopped at beach near an old shipwreck and managed to track down a Rufous-chested Dotterel. We then had some free time to explore Stanley, which was very British and felt like it had not aged at the same speed as the rest of the world. The pubs served fish and chips and a local ale, while other passengers browsed the gift shops, explored the museums, and visited the post office. By later afternoon, we were back on board the *Ioffe* and steaming east away from the islands at a steady 12 knots. This area can be great for dolphins, and we saw over 20 Peale's Dolphins including some that were jumping out of the water for great views.



Magellanic Cormorant, also known as "Rock Shag" (left) and Sedge Wren (right), the endemic falklandicus subspecies



Stanley's famous cathedral with its whalebone arch



White-bridled Finch



One of the many Peale's Dolphins we saw east of the Falklands

4-5 February: South Georgia was beckoning, but we needed two full days to get there. Sea days are never dull, and our first day out of the Falklands was loaded with great seabirds like several Wandering Albatrosses, good numbers of Soft-plumaged Petrels, and a few Gray Petrels, along with the other more common species. Numbers of Sooty and Greater Shearwaters dwindled rapidly and we would not see them again until the end of the trip. A pod of Long-finned Pilot Whales were the cetacean highlight, and we saw a few more Hourglass Dolphins, though not as well as before. As with all sea days, One Ocean staff gave a series of talks and presentations for those who wanted a break from staring at the ocean. That evening we crossed the Antarctic Convergence into colder waters, the temperature fell a few more degrees. The wind died down to almost nothing, the seas became almost calm, and an eerie fog settled in that seriously hindered visibility. It was a good morning to have our briefing for South Georgia (mandated by the government before visitors can land) and to “biosecure” our gear to ensure we did not accidentally introduce anything to the region’s fragile ecosystem. This took about an hour and half, and soon were we were back outside. It was such a calm day that we could easily watch from the bow without worry of getting splashed. Antarctic Prions and Black-bellied Storm-Petrels started appearing in good numbers, and spotted some Gray-headed Albatrosses. We saw our first iceberg and passed the Shag Rocks, which jut up above the ocean from an undersea ridge about 130 miles west of South Georgia. The fog was so thick we couldn’t even see them, and a lone South Georgia Shag flying by was the only hint that they were nearby. “What happened to the Shag Rocks” became a running joke for the rest of the cruise... Later that evening we started seeing lots of Common Diving-Petrels as we neared land again.



Sooty Shearwater



Greater Shearwater



Gray Petrel



Black-bellied Storm-Petrel



Wandering Albatross



Antarctic Prion and Northern Giant Petrel



We saw good numbers of Soft-plumaged Petrels (left) during the transit to South Georgia, and a few Common Diving-Petrels near the Shag Rocks



Large flocks of Antarctic Prions were a common sight in the waters around South Georgia

6 February: Where was South Georgia? We couldn't see anything in the persistent fog. Finally, during breakfast we sailed into the Bay of Isles and, finally, out of the mist, to be greeted by this view...



...and we knew we had arrived. There are endless superlatives to describe South Georgia, and phrases like “stunning”, “unique”, “mind-blowing”, and even “cosmic mind-blast” were frequently upon passengers’ lips during our three full days here. Not much truly compares to seeing 200,000 King Penguins coloring the landscape below distant snow-capped peaks. South Georgia is thought to have more wildlife per area than anywhere else on Earth, and it is only accessible by ship – there is nowhere to land a plane on the island. This remote, unique, and beautiful wilderness area was the clear favorite for nearly everyone on the ship.

We spent the calm, mostly sunny morning on Salisbury Plain, where the King Penguin colony was the highlight of the day (and perhaps the entire trip). When not watching and photographing penguins, there were other things to see like South Georgia Pipit (the southernmost breeding passerine), an endemic race of Yellow-billed Pintail, Brown Skuas, Southern Elephant Seals, and Antarctic Fur Seals. The fur seals were on virtually every beach in South Georgia in amazing numbers, and while the pups were cute and curious, the adults were often irascible and short-tempered. It became a common sight for a passenger to confront an angry, charging seal, raising arms or clapping hands to stop it in its tracks. They always back off, but have been known to bite the foolish tourist who chooses to turn tail and run rather than bravely face the onslaught head on.



The beach at Salisbury plain that we landed on, during a very brief snow flurry that ended almost as soon as it started.



Southern Elephant Seals dozing in the tussock grass



A King Penguin chick waits patiently at the edge of the immense colony

In the afternoon, we crossed the bay and anchored next to Prion Isle, home to one of the only accessible Wandering Albatross nesting colonies anywhere. It's only open to visitors later in the season, and due to strict visitor regulations we only had a short time there, but none of us had ever expected to be within a few meters of nesting Wandering Albatrosses – it was a truly special experience.



Later in the afternoon, we cruised in the Zodiacs around the island, seeing a few Light-mantled Albatrosses among the many Wanderers flying over the island, and had our best views yet of South Georgia Shag before heading back to the ship.



South Georgia Shag from Prion Isle in the Bay of Isles

7 February: Strong winds and fog prevented us from attempting the so-called “Shackleton hike” from Fortuna Bay to Stromness, but to be honest, none of our group was probably going to do it anyway – it’s a tough slog with little wildlife viewing opportunities. Instead we landed at a beach next to the old whaling station at Stromness, long since abandoned, and now inhabited only by seals and penguins.



If the penguins were the highlight of Salisbury Plain, this morning belonged to the Antarctic Fur Seals. We enjoyed watching their antics on the beach and nearby grassy plains.



An Antarctic Fur Seal bathes in the shallow water by Stromness



Two young fur seals face off in mock battle.

In the middle of the day, we steamed east along the coast towards Grytviken, getting some of our best views of Gray-headed and Light-mantled Albatross along the way, along with our first definite South Georgia Diving-Petrel. Grytviken is another old whaling station, but has been refurbished and serves as the “port of entry” to South Georgia as well as a visitor’s center. A government agent came onboard to stamp passports, while a member of the South Georgia Heritage Trust gave us a briefing on their ongoing project to eradicate introduced rats from the island. The mission is proceeding well (which is the only reason we had seen so many pipits the previous morning), but there is still more work to be done; it was not hard to find willing donors to protect such a special place. Once the formalities were finished, we went ashore, pausing briefly for the traditional toast over the graves of Ernest Shackleton and Frank Wild (dodging elephant seals to get to the cemetery). We had the rest of the afternoon free to wander around, take photos, and visit the museums and gift shop.



Light-mantled Albatross (left) and Gray-headed Albatross (right). The glacial melt gave the ocean a beautiful turquoise hue.



Grytviken was the best place to photograph Antarctic Terns – two parents flank their young fledgling here

8 February: While Gold Harbour may not have as many penguins as Salisbury Plain, the surroundings are arguably even more beautiful with an impressive hanging glacier looming over the beach.



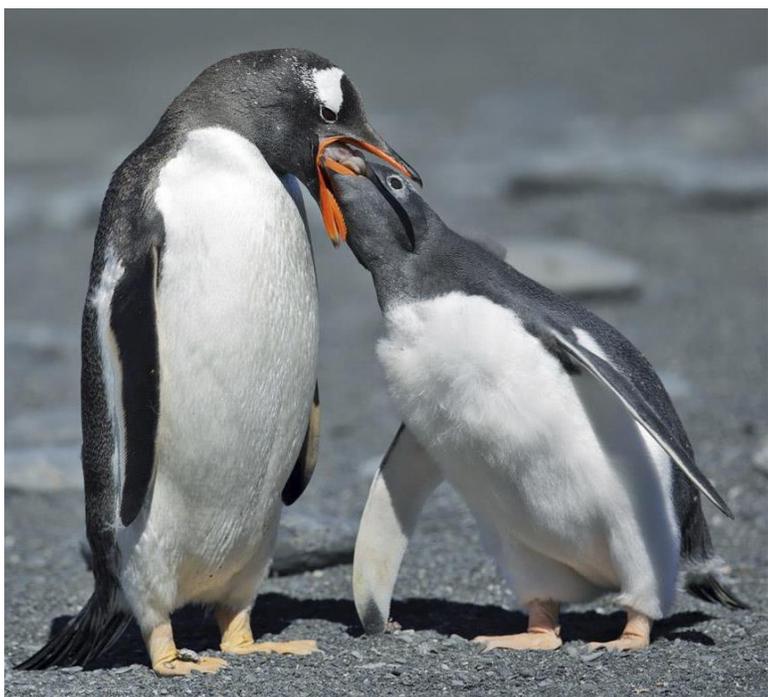
We had another warm, sunny morning in paradise, and as this would be our last chance to set foot on South Georgia, we made sure to enjoy every possible minute. This time Gentoo Penguins were also in evidence, with young birds chasing



after haggard looking parents and begging for a bit of regurgitated fish. Snowy Sheathbills (left) flew around like white pigeons, landing and trotting around the penguins (and even our feet) looking for tidbits. Brown Skuas and Northern Giant-Petrels slept on the beach and we had to be very careful not step on them. More Southern Elephant Seals lounged around in loose piles, and tempers flared as some adolescent males reared up to bellow at each other. We also saw the rat eradication program in action as helicopters flew in supplies to a forward operating base as they prepared to spread rat bait over the southeastern part of the island.



"King" of the hill?



Gentoo Penguins were very active at Gold Harbour, marching back and forth between the ocean and their hungry chicks.



A young male Southern Elephant Seal "bathing" in the sand.

Back on the ship, we continued southeast along the coast and enjoyed our best whale watching of the entire voyage. Two Southern Right Whales, covered with their characteristic white callosities, started it off, but a distant towering blow beckoned. The captain turned the ship and as we closed in we realized we were looking at a mother and calf Blue Whale, a very rare sighting, especially around South Georgia; its whale population had been decimated during the whaling era, which ended in the 1960's when there almost none left. Whaling is of course now illegal in South Georgia, and they are making a comeback. After that first sighting, we amazingly saw five more Blue Whales over the course of the afternoon (none at all had been seen prior to today from the *loffie* during the entire 2014-2015 Antarctic season). We also saw a few distant Fin Whales, and Humpbacks were literally everywhere, with at least 30 encountered that afternoon. With the exceptional whale watching, we abandoned the idea of a late afternoon Zodiac cruise and instead navigated into the dramatic ice-filled Drygalski Fjord, taking in the amazing scenery and seeing our first Snow Petrels of the trip along with many Macaroni Penguins. After going as far as possible before ice blocked the way, we turned around and sailed around Cape Disappointment, passing through an awe-inspiring field of icebergs that had clumped up along the southeastern corner of the island, and headed out into open ocean towards Antarctica. South Georgia Diving-Petrels appeared in good numbers, and we had our first Blue Petrels of the tour. It had been an unforgettable day, and many of us agreed it was the most memorable of the entire trip.



One of the absolutely enormous icebergs we passed as we rounded Cape Disappointment.



Fluke of one of the Southern Right Whales we saw, and a South Georgia Diving Petrel – note the white secondary covert edges and scapular line.



Parent and calf Blue Whale blowing, off eastern South Georgia on Feb 8, 2015.

9-10 February: We had another two full days at sea as we headed southwest towards Antarctica. Conditions were unusually calm and it hardly felt like we were heading towards the legendary “ice continent”. Blue Petrels were seen in good numbers on both days, along with Antarctic Prions, but numbers of both dwindled as we made our way southwest. Our first pod of Orcas was seen on the second day out before breakfast for those who were watching, and the only Sei Whale of the tour was identified as well. More talks and presentations were available along with another mandatory briefing in preparation for Antarctica, as well as another “vacuum party” to once again biosecure our clothing and gear. Finally we crossed the 60° south parallel, and we truly entered Antarctic waters.



Two of the Blue Petrels we saw between South Georgia and Antarctica



White-chinned Petrel



Cape Petrel

11 February: Nothing was remotely visible this morning as we approached Elephant Island, but after breakfast land finally came into view out of the thick fog. Conditions did not allow an excursion, but the mist lifted enough for us to see land, and eventually even the bust of Captain Luis Pardo, the brave Chilean sailor who had rescued Sir Ernest Shackleton's 22 crewmen (on 30 Aug 1916) who had all managed to survive more than four months of Antarctic winter on this very site (the bust is located in the lower-central part of the photo below, silhouetted against the snow).



We then steamed towards the southern part of Elephant Island, finally getting out of the fog, and seeing a few swimming Chinstrap Penguins (below left) and our closest views yet of Fin Whale (below right).



We reached Cape Lookout in the afternoon. There was no place to land, but we headed out in the Zodiacs on what was once again an unseasonably warm afternoon. We saw some Antarctic Shags and had our best views yet of Macaroni Penguin, but witnessing a Leopard Seal predated a Chinstrap Penguin was a startling (and grisly) moment. Once the seal was finished, it only took a few seconds before the Kelp Gulls and Wilson's Storm-Petrels arrived to feast on the remains. That evening, we started heading south towards the Antarctic mainland, seeing good numbers of Southern Fulmars as we began crossing the Bransfield Strait.



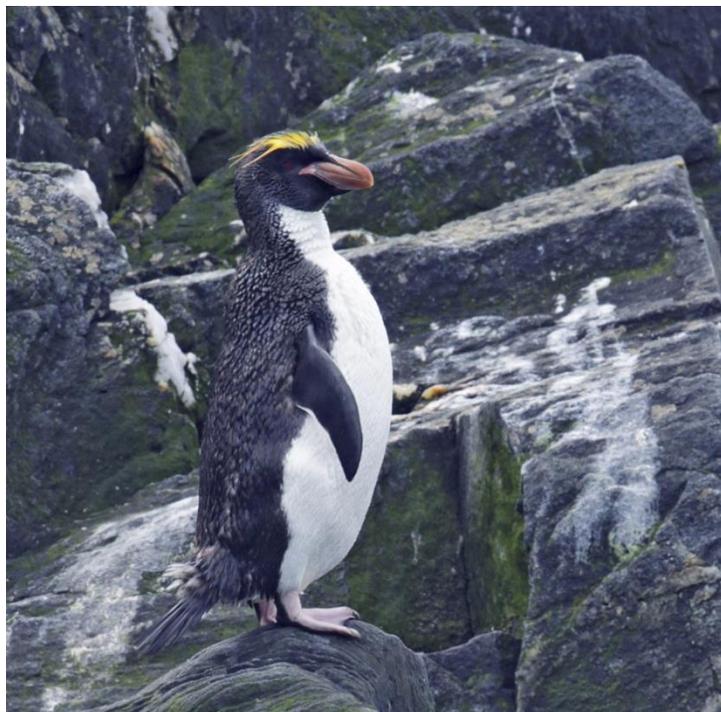
A Leopard Seal finishing off a Chinstrap Penguin at Cape Lookout, Elephant Island



Wilson's Storm-Petrel scavenging remains in the wake of the Leopard Seal attack



Southern Fulmar in the Bransfield Strait



Macaroni Penguin from Cape Lookout, Elephant Island

12 February: Brown Bluff was our first landing on the Antarctic continent, and was well-named:



Apart from chunks of ice that we had to negotiate while landing the Zodiacs, the lack of snow and above freezing temperatures hardly made it feel like we had finally made it to what was the seventh and final continent for many of us. The Adelie Penguins were the clear highlight...



...they are one of only a few bird species that breed exclusively in Antarctica and nearby small islands, and by this point in the season they were almost done. Adults were often seen feeding nearly full-grown chicks, and soon they would all head to the ocean to spend the long fall and winter. Snow Petrels were also nesting here, and we walked up a slope to see a young bird wedged into a dark crevasse under a rocky ledge. Before heading back to the ship, we cruised around in the Zodiacs to look at both Weddell and Crabeater Seals hauled out on ice as well as admire the scenery and icebergs. That afternoon, we headed to the Argentine base of Esperanza. The hardy residents gave us a tour of the premises, and there was even a souvenir shop. Flocks of young Adelie Penguins trotted around seemingly randomly, providing a lot of entertainment, and we watched Snowy Sheathbills feeding their young unspeakable items. Later in the evening, we circumnavigated an iceberg that was also a roosting ground for Gentoo Penguins, for a truly remarkable finish to our first day on the “ice continent”.



A Weddell Seal resting on an iceberg near Brown Bluff



Adult Snowy Sheathbill feeding a chick at Esperanza Station



Esperanza Station, an Argentine base on Antarctica



Gentoo Penguins coming in to roost on an iceberg in the Antarctic Sound

13 February: Overnight we crossed back north through the Bransfield Strait to the South Shetland Islands. Our first stop was Half Moon Island (the low rocky area at the bottom of the photo):



A colony of Chinstrap Penguins was the big draw here, and we spent a lot of time watching and photographing them.





In the afternoon we headed southwest to Deception Island. Whale watching was once again good along the way, with several Fin Whales, Humpbacks, another Orca, and an Antarctic Minke Whale seen. Deception is the caldera of an active volcano, and the sheltered interior is accessed through a very small opening called “Neptune’s Bellows”, requiring some very careful navigation. We landed the Zodiacs on a sandy beach next to some old whaling buildings and a scientific station that was abandoned after an eruption in 1969. The beach had some interesting wrecks, and some of the passengers hiked up to a lookout, but the incredibly tame and inquisitive skuas made for endless entertainment for birders and bird photographers. Both Brown and South Polar Skuas congregated near a small freshwater pool to bathe and rest, allowing for some great comparisons in their often subtle differences. Anything left unattended on the beach, including backpacks and cameras, was fair game for these birds, and it did not take long for one to come up and start pecking and tugging at it. One of them even walked up and tasted me (my boot anyway...) when I sat down to photograph it. That evening, we began steaming back across the Bransfield Straight to Antarctica again.



A Brown Skua (left) lounges on the volcanic beach at Deception Island, while a South Polar Skua (right) takes a bath in a nearby pool



After making sure I wasn't edible, this South Polar Skua came up and stuck its beak into my camera lens!

14 February: A pod of six Orcas got almost the entire ship up early before breakfast as we navigated through the Orléans Straight between Trinity Island and the Antarctic mainland. We dropped anchor in Mikkelson Harbour, and had a morning excursion on D'Hainaut Island, home to a thriving Gentoo Penguin colony. Some of them had nests with very tiny chicks, and we were worried that it was too late in the season for them to fledge and molt before winter. We also had some of our best views of hauled-out Weddell's Seals here, almost looking happy as they waved their flippers at us. Much of the island was still snow-covered, and a wrong step could see you up to your knees if you weren't careful. That afternoon, we went a short distance over to Cierva Cove on the mainland, and cruised around in the Zodiacs for a few hours in the afternoon. It was a chilly, cloudy afternoon, and the ice-filled waters made it finally feel like we were in Antarctica (and made us appreciate all that cold weather gear we had brought). About an hour in, our Zodiac driver Eva surprised everyone by pulling out a thermos of hot chocolate and a flask of Kahlua! It was a much-appreciated treat. The

cruise was a blast as we got close to Humpback Whales, Leopard Seals and ice features in this otherworldly environment.



A Gentoo Penguin on a nest on D'Hainaut Island



A pod of Orcas swimming in the Orléans Strait



Weddell Seal greeting us on D'Hainaut Island



Exploring Cierva Cove in the Zodiacs

15 February: Morning saw us in Andvord Bay, where Antarctic Minke Whales put on a jaw-dropping show, breaching completely out of the water. We anchored in Neko Harbour, and after breakfast had our final excursion on the mainland. After watching Gentoo Penguins bathe in a pool of fresh glacial melt and having some fun in the snow, we returned to the Zodiacs and spent some cruising through the ice and watching Humpback Whales, Leopard Seals, and Crabeater Seals (photo below), and had a neat experience with a Chinstrap Penguin that did a few laps around our boat before climbing up onto a piece of ice and posing perfectly for the cameras.





Chinstrap Penguin posing on a chunk of ice in Neko Harbour



Leopard Seal hauled out on ice in Neko Harbour

Gale-force winds prevented our planned landing at Cuverville Island, so we instead navigated to more sheltered waters in Fournier Bay off of Anvers Island. There were times when the captain had to very carefully direct the ship through ice, and soon after we were in a blizzard with horizontal snow – this was more like the Antarctica we had read about!



It seemed very appropriate to be seeing Snow Petrels in these conditions



We soon sailed out of the snow and found ourselves in better weather in Fournier Bay. The ship seemed surrounded by Humpback Whales at one point, with blows coming from all around. The tally for the day was a remarkable 40. Good numbers of Southern Fulmars were flying by, and we saw our last Antarctic Terns and Antarctic Shags of the trip as we entered the infamous Drake Passage for the final leg of our voyage.



Two of the Humpback Whales we encountered in Fournier Bay



An Antarctic Shag buzzed the bridge as we were heading into the Drake Passage

16-17 February: Seas were only moderately rough as we crossed the Drake, and meals saw just one or two spilled drinks and soups. Seabird activity was fairly low the first day, but picked up a bit on the second day as we had several sightings of Northern Royal Albatross along with Southern, Wanderers, and Gray-headed Albatrosses. With the trip winding down, we went through our photos and shared some with our fellow passengers. The *Ioffe's* staff photographer, David, took many of the photos and created a slideshow that was shown to the whole ship and also distributed on a USB thumb drive to everyone; the drive also included the chart, wildlife list, daily nautical log, and other neat stuff. There were tours of the ship and a charity auction which was loads of fun; I ended up walking away with a very limited edition "rat eradication" t-shirt, while other passengers bid on a bunch of other cool stuff, including the privilege of driving the ship for an hour! That lucky donor got to take us around Cape Horn on the 17th, pulling a few donuts in the process – it's amazing how fast the 6500 ton ship could turn around when asked to.



Northern Royal Albatross in the Drake Passage – note the black carpal mark on the leading edge of the underwing



Distinctive juvenile plumage of Wandering Albatross; it followed us for part of the afternoon

18 February: We had navigated through the Beagle Channel in the night, and were near Ushuaia by the time dawn arrived. A fresh coating of snow was on the mountain peaks, rather unusual as we were still in summer.



We docked perfectly on time at 7:00am, and it was hard to believe our fantastic journey had come to an end. We said our goodbyes and went our separate ways. I was on the first bus that went to the airport (thanks to an unexpected schedule change), but the rest of the TB group and many of the other passengers were spending a night in Ushuaia to prepare for the long journey home, and as insurance against any weather-caused delays in the cruise. It had truly been an unforgettable trip, and I can wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone.

Wildlife List

This list includes everything seen (of which I was aware) including by One Ocean staff and other passengers on the trip. It does not include the extension, which I will list separately.

Bird taxonomy follows Clements/eBird (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/>). Mammal taxonomy does not follow any particular standard. (I)=introduced species.

DUCKS, GEESE, & SWANS

Upland Goose

Common in the Falklands, and some passengers also saw a few on the edge of the Beagle Channel during the first evening.

Kelp Goose

We had great views of this strikingly dimorphic goose along waterfront in Ushuaia as well as on both days in the Falklands.

Ruddy-headed Goose

One family group was near the landing at West Point Island in the Falklands.

ANATIDAE

Chloephaga picta

Chloephaga hybrida

Chloephaga rubidiceps

Flying Steamer-Duck***Tachyeres patachonicus***

Not seen by any of our group during the cruise (we had it on the extension), but other ship passengers saw a flock as we neared West Point Island in the Falklands.

Falkland Steamer-Duck***Tachyeres brachypterus***

Common in the Falklands, with 100+ seen on each of our days there.

Crested Duck***Lophonetta specularioides***

Small numbers were seen in the Falklands at West Point Island, Carcass Island, and near Stanley.

Yellow-billed Pintail***Anas georgica georgica***

Seen every day at South Georgia, but our best views came from Salisbury Plain, where a small flock was in a muddy little pool next to the penguin colony. This is the nominate race, restricted to South Georgia. It is sometimes considered distinct from the mainland South America race, but other than being smaller, does not look very different.

PENGUINS**SPHENISCIDAE****King Penguin*****Aptenodytes patagonicus***

One the best reasons to visit South Georgia - an estimated 250,000 breed on Salisbury Plain, and we also saw a smaller colony of about 25,000 at Gold Harbour, along with smaller numbers elsewhere in and near South Georgia.

Adelie Penguin***Pygoscelis adeliae***

We only saw them on our first day in Antarctica, including several thousand at a breeding colony at Brown Bluff. One of the southernmost breeding birds in the world, nesting only on Antarctica and a few other nearby islands in the South Shetlands and South Orkneys.

Gentoo Penguin***Pygoscelis papua***

The most common penguin on this trip, seen nearly every day except on "sea days" and near South America. The largest colony we visited was at D'Hainaut Island.

Chinstrap Penguin***Pygoscelis antarcticus***

Seen daily south of 60°; by far most the most we saw was at the colony we visited at Half Moon Island.

Magellanic Penguin***Spheniscus magellanicus***

Good numbers seen in both the Beagle Channel and in the Falklands. Our best views were at Carcass Island, where there were some active nests.

Macaroni Penguin***Eudyptes chrysolophus***

Our best views were at Cape Lookout on Elephant Island, where we saw a small colony during a Zodiac cruise. We also regularly saw them porpoising while cruising around South Georgia, and there was one lone individual among all the Chinstraps at Half Moon Island.

Rockhopper Penguin***Eudyptes chrysocome chrysocome***

Fantastic views at a colony on West Point Island on the Falklands. A few were seen porpoising the following day, and some were reported as we rounded Cape Horn at the end of the trip.

ALBATROSSES**DIOMEDEIDAE****Gray-headed Albatross*****Thalassarche chrysostoma***

First encountered between the Falklands and South Georgia, and then seen in small numbers nearly every day after that.

Black-browed Albatross***Thalassarche m. melanophris***

By far the most common albatross on our voyage, but the active colony we visited at West Point Island ranked as one of the top highlights of the trip.

Light-mantled Albatross***Phoebastria palpebrata***

At least one was seen every day from the first day out of the Falklands until Elephant Island. Our best views came near Grytviken in South Georgia.

(Southern) Royal Albatross***Diomedea epomophora epomophora***

Seen best on the day at sea on the way to the Falklands, but there also a few between the Falklands and South Georgia and in the Drake Passage.

(Northern) Royal Albatross***Diomedea epomophora sanfordi***

Two were seen by One Ocean guides between the Falklands and South Georgia, but none of us were there for it. Some of us finally caught up with it in the Drake Passage. It is widely considered a separate species, but the Clements list still lumps it with Southern.

Wandering Albatross***Diomedea exulans***

It was a real treat to be able to visit the nesting colony on Prion Island off of South Georgia, but we also saw them regularly while at sea (in very small numbers), often following the ship for extended periods. The South Atlantic population has sadly declined propitiously due to long-line fishing.

SHEARWATERS & PETRELS**PROCELLARIIDAE****Southern Giant-Petrel*****Macronectes giganteus***

Very common, seen on all but a few days of the trip.

Northern Giant-Petrel***Macronectes halli***

Common around South Georgia; also seen in small numbers on the way to the Falklands, between the Falklands and South Georgia, between South Georgia and Elephant Island, around Elephant Island, and in the Drake. Not seen in Antarctica.

Southern Fulmar***Fulmarus glacialisoides***

Apart from 1 seen the second day out of South Georgia, we only had them in the Bransfield Strait after leaving Elephant Island, and near Anvers Island before entering the Drake Passage.

Cape Petrel***Daption capense***

A beautiful and widespread tubenose, seen on most days, though the largest numbers were encountered as we sailed around the southeastern corner of South Georgia.

Snow Petrel***Pagodroma nivea***

A striking and well-named bird - a few dozen were seen around the icebergs near Drygaski Fjord and Cape Disappointment in South Georgia, and again in Fournier Bay. We also saw a chick at a staked-out nest at Brown Bluff.

Soft-plumaged Petrel***Pterodroma mollis***

Seen in good numbers between the Falklands and South Georgia. At least ten were also noted the second day out of South Georgia, which was a bit of a surprise. A few more were seen in the northern Drake.

Blue Petrel***Halobaena caerulea***

Best seen between South Georgia and Elephant Island, but a few more were encountered as we began our crossing of the Drake Passage.

Antarctic Prion***Pachyptila desolata***

We started seeing them the second day out of the Falklands, and ended up seeing tremendous numbers of them around South Georgia. By the time we reached Elephant Island, they were all gone.

Slender-billed Prion***Pachyptila belcheri***

We saw several hundred on the way to the Falklands, but they disappeared during our second day on the archipelago.

Unidentified Prion***Pachyptila sp.***

Prions are notoriously difficult to ID, and there were some that we could not put a name to. Fairy Prions do breed in small numbers on South Georgia, but they are so outnumbered by Antarctic that they are very hard to pick out - we had no definite sightings on this trip.

Gray Petrel***Procellaria cinerea***

One of the least numerous of the tubenoses on our trip, with around five seen on the first day out of the Falklands.

White-chinned Petrel***Procellaria aequinoctialis***

A common pelagic companion for most of the trip, though not seen around Antarctica.

Great Shearwater***Puffinus gravis***

At least fifty were seen on the crossing to the Falklands, but numbers quickly dropped off, and they were gone by the second day between the Falklands and South Georgia.

Sooty Shearwater***Puffinus griseus***

Large numbers on the way to the Falklands and around the archipelago, but we did not see them again until the Drake.

STORM-PETRELS**HYDROBATIDAE****Wilson's Storm-Petrel*****Oceanites oceanicus***

Seen on all but a few days of the trip, with the largest numbers in southeast South Georgia. We saw them flying into crevasses in a few places, such as Half Moon, but the nests were hidden from view.

Gray-backed Storm-Petrel***Garrodia nereis***

We saw small numbers on the way to the Falklands and while cruising around the archipelago. One was also reported on the 8th near South Georgia, which was pretty unusual.

Black-bellied Storm-Petrel***Fregetta tropica***

Seen in decent numbers on most days after we crossed the Antarctic Convergence between the Falklands and South Georgia.

DIVING-PETRELS**PELECANOIDIDAE****Common Diving-Petrel*****Pelecanoides urinatrix***

The largest numbers were encountered as we approached West Point Island in the Falklands, but we also saw them in good numbers around South Georgia and near the Shag Rocks.

South Georgia Diving-Petrel***Pelecanoides georgicus***

Difficult to separate from Common Diving-Petrel (there is apparently a certain amount of overlap in the plumage features), but we photographed several "definites" on the northeast and east side of South Georgia. The largest numbers appeared as we were rounding Cape Disappointment - elsewhere it always seemed to be outnumbered by Common. Two were also seen by Steve Bailey in the southern Drake Passage.

Unidentified Diving-Petrel***Pelecanoides sp.***

Many diving-petrels around South Georgia could not be identified with certainty. I also saw one distant diving-petrel in the Beagle Channel that could well have been a Magellanic, but it was too far and too dark to be sure. Magellanic Diving-Petrel used to be fairly common in the Beagle, but in recent years they are encountered much less frequently.

CORMORANTS AND SHAGS**PHALACROCORACIDAE****Magellanic Cormorant (Rock Shag)*****Phalacrocorax magellanicus***

At least fifty seen both days in the Falklands, mostly in the Woolly Gut and at Gypsy Cove. (They are also in the Beagle, but we weren't really looking)

Antarctic Shag***Phalacrocorax bransfieldensis***

Seen daily from when we arrived at Elephant Island until we started crossing the Drake. Both this species, South Georgia Shag, and Imperial Shag are very similar, and are sometimes lumped as one species, "Blue-eyed Shag".

South Georgia Shag***Phalacrocorax georgianus***

One was seen near the Shag Rocks, then seen in good numbers each day at South Georgia.

Imperial Cormorant***Phalacrocorax atriceps***

Thousands were seen in the Beagle Channel, as well as hundreds each day on the Falklands. A few birds in the Beagle Channel appeared to be the white-cheeked nominate subspecies, the rest (and all at the Falklands) were the dark-cheeked albiventer subspecies.

HERONS AND EGRETS**ARDEIDAE****Black-crowned Night-Heron*****Nycticorax nycticorax***

A few were seen both days on the Falklands, including some active nests at Gypsy Cove near Stanley.

NEW WORLD VULTURES**CATHARTIDAE****Turkey Vulture*****Cathartes aura***

About five were seen each day on the Falklands.

SHEATHBILLS**CHIONIDAE****Snowy (Pale-faced) Sheathbill*****Chionis albus***

While a few passengers saw one near Prion Island on our first day in South Georgia, we started seeing them in good numbers at Gold Harbour. They were also present at the Adelie Penguin colony at Brown Bluff, at Esperanza Station, at the Chinstrap colony on Half Moon Island, and a lone bird was seen on Trinity Island.

OYSTERCATCHERS**HAEMATOPODIDAE****Blackish Oystercatcher*****Haematopus ater***

Seen only on the Falklands, with superb encounters on Carcass Island and a few around Gypsy Cove and Stanley.

Magellanic Oystercatcher***Haematopus leucopodus***

The best views came on the rocky shore at Carcass Island on the Falklands.

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS**CHARADRIIDAE****Southern Lapwing*****Vanellus chilensis***

A confiding pair was seen on the waterfront in Ushuaia shortly before we boarded the Ioffe.

Two-banded Plover***Charadrius falklandicus***

Six were scoped on a beach at Gypsy Cove on the Falklands.

Rufous-chested Dotterel***Charadrius modestus***

One immature was located on a beach near Stanley.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES**SCOLOPACIDAE****White-rumped Sandpiper*****Calidris fuscicollis***

Five birds were at Gypsy Cove on the Falklands.

SKUAS AND JAEGER**STERCORARIIDAE****Chilean Skua*****Stercorarius chilensis***

At least fifteen were seen in the Beagle Channel, with a single bird noted as crossed to the Falklands.

South Polar Skua***Stercorarius maccormicki***

Mostly encountered after we reached Antarctica, with up to 30 seen per day. Single birds were noted near South Georgia and the Falklands, and others were likely overlooked.

Brown (Subantarctic) Skua***Stercorarius antarcticus lonnbergi***

The largest numbers were in South Georgia, where on most days it was the only skua noted. The Brown Skuas are sometimes split, differing mainly in size and proportions.

Brown (Southern) Skua***Stercorarius antarcticus antarcticus***

This subspecies is found in around the Falklands, where we saw a few each day.

Unidentified/hybrid skua***Stercorarius sp.***

Skua ID is difficult, and often impossible at any distance; they are also known to hybridize. It was not unusual to leave skuas as "unidentified".

GULLS & TERNS**LARIDAE****Dolphin Gull*****Leucophaeus scoresbii***

This attractive gull was seen only around Ushuaia and in the Falklands.

Kelp Gull***Larus dominicanus***

Seen every day that we were near land, and the only gull on South Georgia and Antarctica.

Arctic Tern***Sterna paradisaea***

A single bird was seen by Steve Bailey on the 8th.

South American Tern***Sterna hirundinacea***

Hundreds were seen around Ushuaia and in the Beagle Channel, and several were encountered in the Falklands.

Antarctic Tern***Sterna vittata***

Seen daily in moderate numbers in South Georgia, Elephant Island, and Antarctica. Recently-fledged juveniles were seen at Grytviken.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS**FALCONIDAE****Striated Caracara*****Phalco boenus australis***

These inquisitive birds were almost fearless on West Point Island and Carcass Island in the Falklands. Definitely a Falklands specialty, as it is easier to see here than anywhere else in its small range.

Southern Caracara***Caracara plancus***

Singles seen by some passengers in the Beagle Channel and on the Falklands.

OVENBIRDS**FURNARIIDAE****Blackish Cinclodes*****Cinclodes antarcticus***

A few dozen were easy to see and photograph on the rocky shoreline at Carcass Island. A few more were also noted at Gypsy Cove. Sometimes called "Tussockbird", this species is easier to find on the Falklands than anywhere else in its rather small and remote range.

Buff-winged Cinclodes***Cinclodes fuscus***

One bird rested on the ship for an hour or so as we crossed the Lemaire Straight en-route to the Falklands. It is a long distance migrant, and I don't know if was way off course or just crossing the straight after nesting, starting its trip north.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS**TYRANNIDAE****Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant*****Muscisaxicola maclovianus***

Ten or so were seen each day on the Falklands.

WRENS**TROGLODYTIDAE****Cobb's Wren*****Troglodytes cobbi***

Endemic to the Falklands. They were common and inquisitive on Carcass Island. Very similar to House Wren, and an argument can certainly be made that it should be lumped, but it's certainly more fun considering it an endemic species!

Sedge Wren

Best seen at Gypsy Cove, but some passengers also saw a pair at Carass Island. This subspecies is endemic to the Falklands. A paper has been written that recommends splitting Sedge Wren into 11 species. In that treatment, the Falklands subspecies would be included in *C. hornensis* and called Austral Wren.

Cistothorus platensis falklandicus**THRUSHES****Austral Thrush**

A few birds were seen each day on the Falklands.

TURDIDAE***Turdus falcklandii*****PIPITS****Correndera Pipit**

Several were seen in the grasslands as we hiked over West Point Island to the albatross/penguin breeding colony, and a few more were seen near Stanley. This race is endemic to the Falklands, but I am not aware of any impending split.

MOTACILLIDAE***Anthus correndera grayi*****South Georgia Pipit**

Around 15 seen only on our first day in South Georgia, at Salisbury Plain and Prion Island. The world's southernmost breeding passerine. The dozen or so that we saw on mainland South Georgia at Salisbury Plain is good evidence of the success of the rat eradication project. Even just a few years ago they were hardly ever seen here.

Anthus antarcticus**TANAGERS AND ALLIES****White-bridled Finch**

Seen both days on the Falklands, first at Carcass Island and then again at Gypsy Cove, including a couple of very handsome males.

THRAUPIDAE***Melanodera melanodera melanodera*****TROUPIALS AND ALLIES****Long-tailed Meadowlark**

Common and conspicuous on the Falklands, where it is known locally as "military starling".

ICTERIDAE***Sturnella loyca falklandicus*****SISKINS****Black-chinned Siskin**

Decent-sized flocks were seen at both West Point Island and Carcass Island in the Falklands, with a few also noted at Gypsy Cove.

FRINGILLIDAE***Spinus barbatus*****OLD WORLD SPARROWS****House Sparrow (I)**

Seen only in Ushuaia and in Stanley.

PASSERIDAE***Passer domesticus*****MAMMALS****European Hare (I)**

A single of the this introduced species was seen near Gypsy Cove in the Falklands.

Lepus europeus**South American Sea Lion**

Lots of dark shapes were seen in the Beagle Channel on the 31st as it was getting dark, and we had some better but rather distant views in the Woolly Gut as we got to the Falklands. We had much better views on the extension when we took a yacht out to a breeding colony in the Beagle.

Otaria flavescens**South American Fur Seal**

A single was noted by Steve Bailey and me at sea near the Falklands, identified from the previous species by its narrow snout.

Arctocephalus australis

Antarctic Fur Seal***Arctocephalus gazella***

A constant companion at South Georgia and Antarctica - the high count was around 25000 our first day at South Georgia, most of those at Salisbury Plain. Also encountered regularly at sea.

Leopard Seal***Hydrurga leptonyx***

We had good luck finding this predatory seal (which actually eats far more krill than penguins). Three were seen at Cape Lookout on Elephant Island where we also witnessed one kill a penguin. We also found them near Livingston Island, at Cierva Cove, Neko Harbour, and Fournier Bay.

Weddell Seal***Leptonychotes weddellii***

Good views at Cape Lookout on Elephant Island as well as out first three days in Antarctica and the South Shetlands.

Crabeater Seal***Lobodon carcinophaga***

Two seen at Brown Bluff with several more in Neko Harbour and Fournier Bay. Always seen hauled out on ice.

Southern Elephant Seal***Mirounga leonina***

Three were seen at Carcass Island in the Falklands, but most sightings came from South Georgia, with at least 40 seen on each day there. Good numbers were also present at Elephant Island, which was named after the species.

Southern Right Whale***Eubalaena australis***

Two seen together, probably cow and calf, northeast of Cooper Bay of the east coast of South Georgia.

Antarctic Minke Whale***Balaenoptera bonaerensis***

Our best sightings by far were in Andvord Bay as we approached Neko Harbour, but at least one was seen per day each day in Antarctic waters.

Sei Whale***Balaenoptera borealis***

Only one definite sighting by Steve Bailey the second sea day out of South Georgia. I don't think any of our group saw it.

(Southern) Blue Whale***Balaenoptera musculus intermedia***

A remarkable seven Blue Whales were seen on a magical afternoon as we cruised south along the coast of South Georgia towards Cooper Bay, including a fairly close view of a cow and calf. It was certainly a highlight of the trip for some of us!

Fin Whale***Balaenoptera physalus***

One of the most common whales we encountered on the voyage. First seen as we were approaching Stanley in the Falklands. Two were also seen east of South Georgia, with the largest numbers coming on the second day out of South Georgia and the next few days after that.

Humpback Whale***Megaptera novaeangliae***

The most common whale on the trip, recorded on 8 days, with the highest numbers coming from northeast of Cooper Bay in South Georgia and in Fournier Bay off of Anvers Island.

Peale's Dolphin***Lagenorhynchus australis***

We had several nice encounters with this handsome dolphin between the Beagle Channel and our first afternoon out of the Falklands towards South Georgia. We saw them again the last evening near Cape Horn.

Hourglass Dolphin***Lagenorhynchus cruciger***

Remarkable views of this beauty in transit to the Falklands, but we also encountered them occasionally (though didn't see them nearly as well) between the Falklands and South Georgia and between South Georgia and Elephant Island.

Orca (Killer Whale)***Orcinus orca***

A pod of four seen at sea on our second day out of South Georgia were probably "type A". A single near Trinity Island and a pod of six in the Orleans Straight were probably "type B".

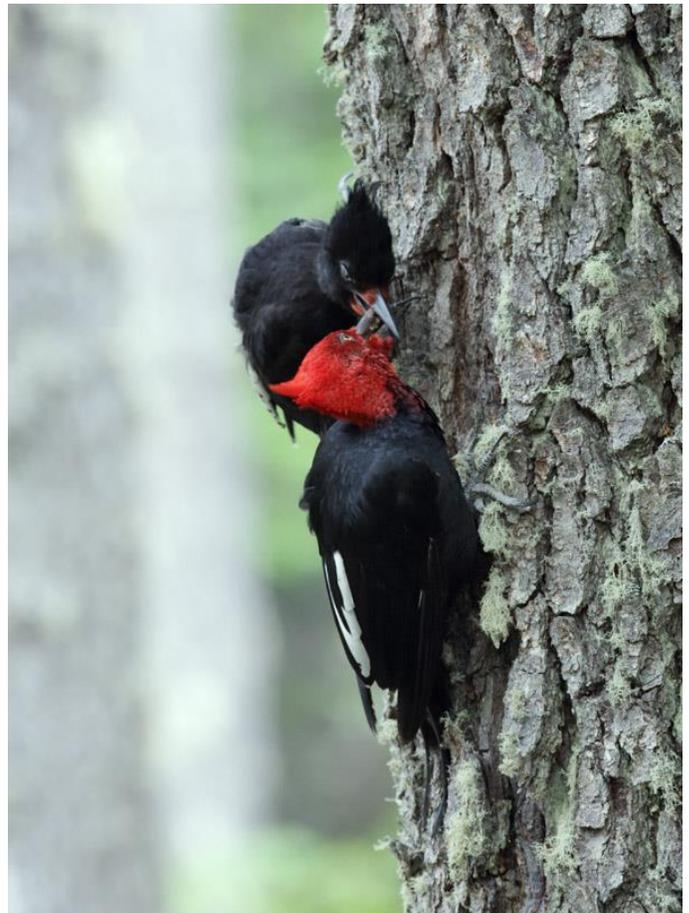
Long-finned Pilot Whale***Globicephala melas***

One pod of seven were seen at sea on our first day out of the Falklands.

Tierra del Fuego extension summary

Three of the group arrived a few days early, and I guided them on an extension to Tierra del Fuego. This isn't always possible, but with one of our guides joining the cruise this time, we were able to do it. Even on trips where our guides are not present, we can offer some advice about what to do on any free days that are available.

After arriving, we headed straight out to Tierra del Fuego National Park, which is only about 20 minutes out of town, and had some great scope views of a flock of Austral Parakeets just outside of Ushuaia. Inside the park, we had an amazing experience with a family group of Magellanic Woodpeckers (photos below). A male was busily finding food for a nearly full-grown fledgling while the female looked on. We also had some nice sightings of Andean Condor, Austral Pygmy-Owl, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Dark-bellied Cinclodes, Flightless Steamer-Duck, and Chimango Caracara just to mention a few.



Next day, we took a cruise out onto the Beagle Channel, getting nice views of a thriving South American Sealion colony along with Imperial and Magellanic Cormorants and Chilean Skuas. This was well worth doing even though we would cruise down the Beagle on the first day of the main tour. After that, we drove up to Rio Grande, passing through scenic mountains and lakes and emerging onto the flat plains of northern Tierra del Fuego. We saw herds of Guanacos along with nice waterfowl like Flying Steamer-Duck, Chiloe Wigeon, Yellow-billed Pintail, and Yellow-billed Teal. Around Rio Grande, we visited Estancia Maria Behety which was in the midst of their yearly shearing. The workers were very friendly and we had an impromptu tour of their enormous shearing barn before heading out into the fields. It was rather dry and we had no luck with the hoped-for Magellanic Plover, but saw other neat birds like Black-faced Ibis, Austral Negrito, Short-billed Miner, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, South American Snipe, Correndera Pipit, Patagonian Yellow-Finch, and Culpeo Fox. Later in the day, we stopped at the Punta Popper shorebird sanctuary to see Two-banded Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Brown-hooded Gull, and others, then drove north of town to find some flocks of Ashy-headed Geese. Heading back to Ushuaia, a roadside pond had Red Shoveler and White-cheeked Pintail, some Austral Blackbirds were in a little picnic area, and back in Ushuaia we made the obligatory visit to the dump to see the White-throated Caracaras and Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles. It was raining the last morning and we needed to do some last-minute shopping for the cruise, but still found time to get back into the national park for a few hours, where the major highlight was the family of Black-necked Swans.



South American Sealions at a colony in the Beagle Channel



A herd of Guanacos near Rio Grande



Inside the barn at Estancia Maria Behety



Black-faced Ibis between Ushuaia and Rio Grande



Two-banded Plover at the Punta Popper reserve near Rio Grande

Extension list**(I)=Introduced species, (H)= heard only****DUCKS, GEESE, & SWANS**

Black-necked Swan
Upland Goose
Kelp Goose
Ashy-headed Goose
Flying Steamer-Duck
Flightless Steamer-Duck
Crested Duck
Chiloe Wigeon
Red Shoveler
White-cheeked Pintail
Yellow-billed Pintail
Yellow-billed Teal

PENGUINS

Magellanic Penguin

ALBATROSSES

Black-browed Albatross

CORMORANTS AND SHAGS

Neotropic Cormorant
Magellanic Cormorant (Rock Shag)
Imperial Cormorant

HERONS AND EGRETS

Black-crowned Night-Heron

IBISES AND SPOONBILLS

Black-faced Ibis

NEW WORLD VULTURES

Turkey Vulture
Andean Condor

HAWKS, EAGLES, AND KITES

Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle

OYSTERCATCHERS

Blackish Oystercatcher
Magellanic Oystercatcher

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS

Southern Lapwing
Two-banded Plover

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES

Sanderling
Baird's Sandpiper
White-rumped Sandpiper
South American Snipe

SKUAS AND JAEGERS

Chilean Skua

GULLS & TERNS

Brown-hooded Gull
Dolphin Gull

ANATIDAE

Cygnus melancoryphus
Chloephaga picta
Chloephaga hybrida
Chloephaga poliocephala
Tachyeres patachonicus
Tachyeres pteneres
Lophonetta specularioides
Anas sibilatrix
Anas platalea
Anas bahamensis
Anas georgica
Anas flavirostris

SPHENISCIDAE

Spheniscus magellanicus

DIOMEDEIDAE

Thalassarche m. melanophris

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Phalacrocorax brasilianus
Phalacrocorax magellanicus
Phalacrocorax atriceps

ARDEIDAE

Nycticorax nycticorax

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Theristicus melanopis

CATHARTIDAE

Cathartes aura
Vultur gryphus

ACCIPITRIDAE

Geranoaetus melanoleucus

HAEMATOPODIDAE

Haematopus ater
Haematopus leucopodus

CHARADRIIDAE

Vanellus chilensis
Charadrius falklandicus

SCOLOPACIDAE

Calidris alba
Calidris bairdii
Calidris fuscicollis
Gallinago paraguaiae

STERCORARIIDAE

Stercorarius chilensis

LARIDAE

Chroicocephalus maculipennis
Leucophaeus scoresbii

Kelp Gull

South American Tern

PIGEONS AND DOVES

Rock Pigeon (I)

OWLS

Austral Pygmy-Owl

WOODPECKERS

Magellanic Woodpecker

FALCONS AND CARACARAS

White-throated Caracara

Southern Caracara

Chimango Caracara

PARROTS

Austral Parakeet

TAPACULOS

Magellanic Tapaculo (H)

OVENBIRDS

Short-billed Miner

Buff-winged Cinclodes

Dark-bellied Cinclodes

Thorn-tailed Rayadito

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Tufted Tit-Tyrant

White-crested Elaenia

Austral Negrilo

Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant

Fire-eyed Diucon

SWALLOWS

Chilean Swallow

WRENS

House Wren

Sedge Wren

THRUSHES

Austral Thrush

PIPITS

Correndera Pipit

TANAGERS AND ALLIES

Patagonian Sierra-Finch

Patagonian Yellow-Finch

SPARROWS

Rufous-collared Sparrow

TROUPIALS AND ALLIES

Long-tailed Meadowlark

Austral Blackbird

SISKINS

Black-chinned Siskin

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

House Sparrow (I)

Larus dominicanus

Sterna hirundinacea

COLUMBIDAE

Columba livia

STRIGIDAE

Glaucidium nana

PICIDAE

Campephilus magellanicus

FALCONIDAE

Phalco boenus albogularis

Caracara plancus

Milvago chimango

PSITTACIDAE

Enicognathus ferrugineus

RHINOCRYPTIDAE

Scytalopus magellanicus

FURNARIIDAE

Geositta antarctica

Cinclodes fuscus

Cinclodes patagonicus

Aphrastura spinicauda

TYRANNIDAE

Anairetes parulus

Elaenia albiceps

Lessonia rufa

Muscisaxicola capistratus

Xolmis pyrope

HIRUNDINIDAE

Tachycineta meyeni

TROGLODYTIDAE

Troglodytes aedon

Cistothorus platensis

TURDIDAE

Turdus falcklandii

MOTACILLIDAE

Anthus correndera

THRAUPIDAE

Phrygilus patagonicus

Sicalis lebruni

EMBERIZIDAE

Zonotrichia capensis

ICTERIDAE

Sturnella loyca

Curaeus curaesus

FRINGILLIDAE

Spinus barbatus

PASSERIDAE

Passer domesticus

MAMMALS

Culpeo Fox

Lycalopex culpaeus

Guanaco

Lama guanicoe

European Rabbit (I)

Oryctolagus cuniculus

South American Sea Lion

Otaria flavescens