



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Antarctica Trip Report

The Falklands, South Georgia & Antarctica

*28<sup>th</sup> December 2014 to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015*



Gold Harbour, South Georgia with King Penguins and Southern Elephant Seal by Markus Lilje

**Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Markus Lilje**

### **Tour Summary**

In the late afternoon, after filling up with fresh water and getting everyone aboard the Akademik Sergey Vavilov, we began our adventure. The port of Ushuaia is the southern-most city in the world and usually used as a base for ships travelling to the Antarctic Peninsula. From the ship itself we were able to find South American Tern, Flying Steamer Duck and Chilean Skua. On this ship the Rockjumper group made up just over a tenth of the almost 100 passengers from all over the world. We were to spend the next 18 nights, exploring the southern ocean around the Falkland Island group, far-flung South Georgia and finally the Antarctic Peninsula far to the south. We headed out

through the Beagle Channel and found a fair variety of birdlife here after our lifeboat drill and managed to see Southern Giant Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and Magellanic Penguin as we sailed through a slowly darkening sky and eventually set our course north-east early the following morning.



**Cape Petrel by Markus Lilje**

We had a full day at sea between the South American mainland and our first planned landing in the western Falklands. This area also gave us our first taste of swell and wind and a number of birds soared around the ship, whilst the number of guests at the breakfast table dropped as the vessel motion was not everyone's cup of tea. During the day we explored the vessel and got to know where the best places were for sea-watching in different conditions. We were fortunate that this ship often has the bridge open for guests to be able to sit in the dry and warmth to watch what is happening in the surrounding seas; this was usually the best place to look out for any birds and animals and we spent numerous hours here during the tour. This day gave us the opportunity to see many of the widespread species that we would see a lot of during the next weeks and also to try and sort out some of the trickier ones to

identify. Some of the commoner species included Sooty and Great Shearwaters, Cape and White-chinned Petrels, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel and Wilson's Storm Petrel. We also found a few less common species including both Northern and Southern Royal Albatrosses, Northern Giant Petrel and our only Grey-backed Storm Petrel and Magellanic Diving Petrel of the tour. Lectures on board had commenced in earnest and apart from the wildlife, the history of the Falklands was brought to life as were the final explanations of how landings would work and we eagerly anticipated our arrival on the shores of this famed island.



**Cobb's Wren by Markus Lilje**

Early on the morning of our arrival in the Falklands we were welcomed by some very interested Commerson's Dolphins that also accompanied us on our



**Black-browed Albatross colony by Markus Lilje**

way to the first landing of the tour, at Carcass Island. On the beach here we were welcomed by both Falkland's endemic birds species: Cobb's Wren and Falkland's Steamer Duck, as well as Blackish Cinclodes. We spent a few hours here, enjoying spending time with our first penguins of the trip – mainly Magellanic, which were mainly seen on the beach, while a number of Gentoo Penguin were seen a little further away. A few other species were also seen here, including Long-tailed Meadowlark, Grass Wren, the stunning White-bridled Finch, Dark-faced



Ground Tyrant and Ruddy-headed and Upland Geese. A few participants then also took part in a beautiful walk across part of the island, which afforded them great views in the good weather we were enjoying, as well as getting views of Ashy-headed Goose and Speckled Teal. During lunch the ship then sailed back a little way to West Point Island, where we would spend a wonderful afternoon. The tours that are fortunate enough to get to land on this island will often consider it one of the top highlights of the entire expedition. After a welcome walk across this privately-owned island and past Kelp and Upland Geese, we got to the mixed breeding colony of Black-browed Albatross and Southern Rockhopper Penguin. A few hours were enjoyed here in the company of these totally relaxed birds and we could watch them go about their business of courting, breeding and flying or walking in and out of their respective nesting sites. Striated Caracara was seen very well here too and is another bird that seems to be almost oblivious to the proximity of humans and allows a close approach. Some participants were then also treated to the now famous spread of tasty treats that is regularly laid out for groups at the owner's home on the island before we headed back to the ship.



White-bridled Finch by Markus Lilje



Church in Port Stanley by Markus Lilje

Our second day in the Falklands was spent in and around Port Stanley, the capital of the island group and home to more than half of the inhabitants. While the ship refuelled here we were able to spend the day ashore. Much of the morning was spent at and near Gypsy Cove, where, in addition to the great scenery, we could watch Peale's Dolphin slowly swimming among the kelp as well as a single South American Sea Lion. Birds in the area included Black-chinned Siskin, Blackish Cinclodes, Rock Shag and colonies of Magellanic Penguin and Black-crowned Night Heron, while we had a flock of White-rumped Sandpiper and Two-banded Plover fly past us. Near the wreck of the Lady Elizabeth we then found a few relaxed South American Snipe, enjoyed great views of Two-banded Plover, Correndera Pipit, Magellanic Oystercatcher and Grass Wren. Around the town itself there were Falkland's Steamer Duck, Dolphin Gull and South American Tern that showed well, while a small number of South American Sea Lions mostly slept through the photo shoots they had with a few interested people. Stanley is well set up for receiving large ships and the small shops, pubs and restaurants were well-frequented, while the local church with its whale-bone structure was another well-visited attraction. That evening, as we sailed east, we celebrated the start of the New Year a few times as it moved to the west towards us and as our excitement built for us for some interesting days ahead.



South Georgia Pipit by Markus Lilje



Due to some very heavy headwinds we were not able to keep our speed at planned levels and lost a little time at South Georgia, but there was enough to do and see on the way. We had just over 2 full days at sea as we crashed our way through some very large waves, first in the southern Atlantic ocean and then in the Southern Ocean as we crossed the convergence zone and entered the colder water to the south. During this time we had many Soft-plumaged Petrel, especially in the warmer waters, as well as our first Wandering, Grey-headed and Light-mantled Albatrosses and Black-bellied Storm Petrel. Our first South Georgia Shag and Antarctic Tern also made an appearance as we got close to the island itself and we also saw more and more Antarctic Fur Seals in the water. On the ship there was a lot to do as well, as we approached this very isolated piece of land with its own and rules and challenges. In addition to getting the needed information on how to keep the island free of any new unwanted invasive species, we were able to hear about some of the very interesting history of the area in various talks that were put on by the staff.



**King Penguin by Markus Lilje**

In the end, despite our slight delay in getting to the island because of bad weather conditions, we were very fortunate in getting to see much of the island during numerous landings as well as a Zodiac cruise later on. Our first stop was an amazing one to start with as our team managed to get us on land despite large swells at one of the biggest King Penguin colonies in the world – Salisbury Plains.



**Antarctic Tern by Markus Lilje**

Here, soon after lunch, we were able to walk through an area full of Southern Elephant and Antarctic Fur Seals and scavenging Northern and Southern Giant Petrels, as well as the slowly recovering South Georgia Pipit and endemic race of Yellow-billed Pintail. The main target for the walk was to get to the penguin colony itself, where an estimated 80 000 pairs of these majestic birds breed each year. Fairly good weather also helped in

making this experience memorable; standing so close to such a profusion of wildlife in such an incredible area will surely be something none of us will ever forget!

Some of the group opted to take part in the offered walk on one morning, which followed the final part of the walk that David Shackelton had to complete to finally find the necessary help to start the rescue of his men on Elephant Island exactly 100 years ago. They were treated to some great views of their surroundings of the Fortuna Bay and Stromness, while those of us on the ship could enjoy the incredible scenery and a few birds in the area, as well as a short landing near the old Whaling Base at Stromness. The afternoon was spent around the port of Grytviken,



**King Penguin colony by Markus Lilje**



now the main base for administration and research on the island. Here we were given a tour of the museum and fascinating whaling base while we also toasted David Shackelton and Frank Wild at the small cemetery nearby. On this island wildlife is never far away and we could enjoy Antarctic Terns feeding young as well as the numerous Southern Elephant and Antarctic Fur Seals lazing on and near the shoreline, plus a few King Penguins that always seem to be around in small numbers.



**Blue Petrel**  
by Markus Lilje

Our final day around South Georgia was another special one as we were greeted by wonderful sunshine as we approached Gold Harbour, and a few Snowy Sheathbill even joined us on the ship for a while (2 of which would later catch a ride with us to Elephant Island!). This particular landing is generally regarded as one of the most spectacular of all, with a large King Penguin colony, many seals hauled up on the beach, and a spectacular backdrop to boot. Again we had a few hours here to enjoy the scene, which included some sparring young male Elephant Seals and very inquisitive young penguins. This was an incredible way to finish our land-based activities on this island that we all hope will now go from strength to strength as whale numbers continue to recover after their fairly recent slaughter, and there is now real hope that even rats can be

removed from this very special and delicate ecosystem, which would allow many bird numbers to recover to even higher numbers here. The Cooper Island area, near the southern point of South Georgia, is well known for its Macaroni and Chinstrap Penguins, and while we were not able to land here, we did see many of these active swimmers very well in the water. The area was also good for getting great views of a number of the other pelagic species during another short spell of sunny weather. A Zodiac cruise in Larson Harbour produced great views of Weddell Seal and feeding Antarctic Tern against a beautiful backdrop and the last bits of green we would see for over a week. We finished off our exploration of the island with a short cruise up the spectacular and steep-sided



**Humpback Whale** by Markus Lilje

Drygalsky Fjord, where we found our first Snow Petrel of the trip. Leaving South Georgia behind, we then headed to the south-west, hoping for some good weather over the next days and looking forward to what was for many participants, their seventh continent!

We were lucky and surprised to get some wind from behind as we headed towards Elephant Island, arriving there about half a day earlier than we would have expected. Unfortunately these conditions are not very good for birding and we didn't get great

numbers of any species during this time, often seeing very few birds at all for long periods. Antarctic Prion were, however, very common on occasion, with a fair number of Blue Petrel as well as the occasional Southern Fulmar joining them. As we approached the fairly isolated Elephant Island and marvelled at the stark beauty of this forbidding coastline, we could consider the men that were stranded here a century before, without all the comforts we could take for



**Antarctic Sound morning** by Markus Lilje



granted on our comfortable ship. As we cruised along near the island's coastline we were amazed by the number of cetaceans, finding many Fin Whales as well as a few Orca and Sei and Humpback Whales feeding in this clearly productive area. As we headed further south, a beautiful clear afternoon allowed for great views of other islands of the South Shetlands and a number of very large tabular icebergs.



**Adelie Penguin by Markus Lilje**

chicks, expecting to leave their breeding sites in the next month. We had a great time watching the antics of these comical birds as they moved around the nest and landing beach. What makes this site particularly fascinating is the dramatic cliff face behind the colony, which hosts breeding Snow and Cape Petrels. The same afternoon we enjoyed a second landing at an Adelie Penguin colony at Madder Cliffs where the mass of tobogganing penguins provided great entertainment.

A spectacular and very early sunrise greeted the early risers as we cruised through the Antarctic Sound and a slowly changing sky. Our way to Paulet Island was eventually blocked by pack ice that spread as far as the eye could see, but the spectacular scenery of the Antarctic mainland and nearby islands certainly made up for this slight disappointment. Plans were changed quickly as we wanted to take advantage of the great weather and as we came closer to our landing site we could see more and more Adelie Penguins on the many small icebergs. Brown Bluff turned out to be a great landing in great conditions as the early-breeding Adelie Penguins were already feeding large



**Brown Bluff icebergs by Markus Lilje**



**Gentoo Penguins by Markus Lilje**

although it did not really show well for everyone. We were also on the lookout for a few of the South Polar Skuas and Wilson's Storm Petrels around the island. Next we moved on to the fascinating Deception Island, an extinct volcanic

Next we headed north again to the western part of the South Shetland Islands. Our first stop here was at the very small Halfmoon Island, where we went ahead in fairly dense fog. The main attraction was a fairly large and very active colony of Chinstrap Penguin that we could watch go about their business around their nests as well as walking to and from those sites to the beach, often along well-worn penguin highways. Another highlight here was seeing a single Macaroni Penguin in the Chinstrap colony,



**Gentoo Penguin diving by Markus Lilje**



island that used to be home to a whaling station in bygone times. At the landing site there is still much debris, including well-preserved wooden row boats strewn across the shore and some of the whaling station. There are many Cape Petrel in the bay here, feeding on krill cooked by the thermal upwelling. Neptune's Window, which has Cape Petrel breeding at eye-level nearby, could be reached after a short walk and afforded great views into and out of the caldera and over the ocean towards Antarctica. It was strange to see penguins here, distantly distorted by the shimmering of the hotter air above – although this did not warm the icy water very much for the people that decided to take part in a polar plunge here! – taking a very brief dip in the Antarctic waters.



**Adelie Penguin tobogganing by Markus Lilje**

Before leaving the area, we enjoyed a rather chilly dinner barbeque out on the deck of our ship with some warming malt wine to keep our spirits high.

We had now reached the last part of our journey in Antarctica, having 2 further days to explore and enjoy the continent from the ship as we cruised through some channels and explored the stunning scenery and icebergs on foot and from the Zodiacs. First we visited D'Hainaut Island, just off the southern end of Trinity Island – another small island where busy Gentoo Penguin highways, close Antarctic Shag and some hauled out Weddell Seal were the highlight. A cruise in the Cierva Cove area was fantastic as we got close to many bizarre and fascinating icebergs as well as getting views of a few Leopard Seals, even seeing one chasing a small group of Gentoo Penguins that were seen porpoising in panic.



**Leopard Seal and Zodiac by Markus Lilje**

Endless variability in amazing icebergs was a continuous point of interest in this area and one of the top bergs we saw was at another brief landing we had at Potal Point, where we also enjoyed wonderful views of the iceberg-choked waters below.

The final day was again an interesting one as we first landed at Neko Harbour, where the main attraction was a wonderful view from a high point, looking down at the ship in the large open harbour and onto a stunning glacier. The Gentoo Penguin colony in the area was also very interesting and quite active, as they could be seen moving up and down their highways. We had a number of good views of South Polar Skua here too, clearly not worried about all the people nearby. The last landing on the tour was at another Gentoo Penguin colony – maybe the most active of all the colonies we had visited thus far as we were able to watch a constant change of birds jumping onto and off various bits of ice and moving up and down from



**Iceberg by Markus Lilje**



their colonies, as well as steal rocks from each other's nests with very little seeming purpose! The weather here was fairly unpleasant, with a lot of snow and fog around, although this could not dampen our enthusiasm for this interesting landing. It was, however, probably a little easier to say goodbye to the continent as a consequence, after spending a fascinating 2 weeks on the ship.

As we again headed north we were expecting to get hit by some very heavy winds as we crossed the infamous Drake Passage. This never did materialise though as we had a particularly calm crossing, which was in a way a little disappointing for some participants who had been looking forward to experiencing what this notorious body of water could throw at our ship. No new species were seen during our crossing either, although we did have more albatrosses following the ship for extended periods than during any other sector of the tour. We were hence able to take our time getting to know some of the variable plumages that can be hard to distinguish since we had all three great albatross species. All the other usual suspects were around too, with a fair number of prions, petrels and shearwaters seen from the upper deck.



**Southern Royal Albatross**  
by Markus Lilje

As we tucked in behind the southern tip of South America, the seas became even calmer and we gradually made our farewell rounds as we again sailed through the Beagle Channel overnight and finally disembarked at Ushuaia. Our final approach was again very interesting as we were accompanied by a wonderful sunrise to welcome us back to solid ground and the green and bright colours of the more usual latitudes. I trust that everyone had a great time exploring the amazing areas we were privileged to visit and had many great experiences etched in their memories! I had a great time with all of you on this somewhat unusual tour and look forward to possibly sharing more time with you in a different part of the world in future!

## BIRDS (71 species)

*Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC (International Ornithological Committee).*

### Key to abbreviations:

**ENDEMISM:** (E): endemic; (NE): near-endemic; (BE): breeding-endemic; (I): introduced

**STATUS:** (En): Endangered; (NT): near-threatened; (Vu): vulnerable

### Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

#### **Flying Steamer Duck**

*Tachyeres patachonicus*

A single bird was from the ship as we departed from Ushuaia.

#### **Falkland Steamer Duck (E)**

*Tachyeres brachypterus*

This Falklands endemic was commonly seen in the Falklands.

#### **Upland Goose**

*Chloephaga picta*

A few seen in the Beagle Channel, with good views later in the Falklands – with many on Carcass Island.

#### **Kelp Goose**

*Chloephaga hybrid*

A few birds, including a few goslings were seen in the Falklands. Common in Ushuaia and the Falkland Islands.



**Ashy-headed Goose (NE)** *Chloephaga poliocephala*

A pair was seen by some during a walk on Carcass Island.

**Ruddy-headed Goose (NE)** *Chloephaga rubidiceps*

A pair greeted us as we got to Carcass Island, while larger numbers we seen on the far side of the island.

**Crested Duck** *Lophonetta specularioides*

A few birds were seen along the shores of Falkland Islands.

**Yellow-billed Teal** *Anas flavirostris*

Around 7 were seen during the hike on Carcass Island.

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

The South Georgia endemic race of this species (*A georgica georgica*) was seen in small numbers on all three days at South Georgia, where they are very relaxed and approachable.

**Penguins Spheniscidae****King Penguin** *Aptenodytes patagonicus*

This magnificent penguin was seen on all three days we had around South Georgia at arm's reach in huge colonies on the Salisbury Plains and at Gold Harbour. Smaller numbers were recorded in the area at sea and along most other coastline stretches we saw, including near Fortuna Bay, Stromness and Grytviken. The experience of being adjacent to one of these huge colonies on South Georgia must rank as one of the most amazing wildlife experiences on the planet!

**Gentoo Penguin (NT)** *Pygoscelis papua*

Both subspecies were seen very well in good quantities, both on shore and foraging at sea throughout most of the trip, with possibly the most active colony at our last landing, at Cuverville Island.

**Adelie Penguin (E)** *Pygoscelis adeliae*

We had amazing weather during our time around the Antarctic Sound, where we visited 2 colonies of these comical birds at Brown Bluff and Madder Cliffs. It was great to watch them on icebergs and being very active around their colonies, including a lot of tobogganing action.

**Chinstrap Penguin (E)** *Pygoscelis antarcticus*

The first few birds were seen around the Cooper's Island in the southern South Georgia region before we enjoyed many good views at a few colonies in the Antarctic area.

**Southern Rockhopper Penguin (Vu)** *Eudyptes chrysocome*

This species was seen very well in the Falklands, where a colony on West Point Island was seen very well and at very close range.

**Macaroni Penguin (Vu)** *Eudyptes chrysolophus*

We had many good views of this species, mainly swimming around South Georgia. A single bird was scoped later inside a colony of Chinstrap Penguins on Halfmoon Island.

**Magellanic Penguin (NT)** *Spheniscus magellanicus*

Many birds were seen in the Falklands Islands, in various colonies, like on Carcass Island and near Stanley.

**Albatrosses Diomedidae****Wandering Albatross (Vu)** *Diomedea exulans*

This greatest of all birds in terms of wingspan and arguably in terms of distance covered was seen mostly at sea between Antarctica and the South American mainland, other birds were seen during the long travel days on either side of South Georgia.

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

We had a number of birds during our crossing of the Drake Passage, while our first birds were seen on the way to the Falklands.

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

2 birds were seen well on our first day at sea, as we headed towards the Falkland Islands.

**Light-mantled Albatross (NT)** *Phoebastria palpebrata*

The sleek and elegant albatross was seen daily in small numbers for a week around South Georgia – some way out at sea. A special and sought-after species.

**Black-browed Albatross (En)** *Thalassarche melanophrys*

Seen almost daily from the ship, except where the conditions were too calm around the Antarctic Peninsula. The undoubted highlight of this species was when we spent time at a fantastic breeding colony on West Point Island.

**Grey-headed Albatross (Vu)** *Thalassarche chrysostoma*

Seen mostly in the area around South Georgia and later in the Drake passage. This is a very popular and elegant species.

### Petrels & Shearwaters Procellariidae

**Southern Giant Petrel (Vu)** *Macronectes giganteus*

We saw this huge petrel almost each day of the trip with spectacular views of birds soaring near the ship and at close range on land. They are commonly seen scavenging on fur seals and penguins on South Georgia.

**Northern Giant Petrel (NT)** *Macronectes halli*

Not quite as common as the previous species, although it was still quite common throughout much of the tour. No obvious colour morph exists, so can only be identified if the bill tip is clearly seen.

**Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis*

Good numbers of this attractive dove grey petrel accompanied the ship for hours with Cape Petrels and various Prion species, mainly as we neared Antarctica.

**Cape Petrel** *Daption capense*

Of all the birds we saw the one species that was most commonly in attendance were the beautifully patterned Cape or Pintado petrels. We also saw these birds at nesting sites on Deception Island.

**Snow Petrel** *Pagodroma nivea*

We saw a few of these birds over the course of the trip with sightings being around the Drygalsky Fjord and at nesting sites at Brown Bluff.

**Blue Petrel** *Halobaena caerulea*

After we had a few birds west of South Georgia, we recorded good numbers as we travelled toward the Antarctic Peninsula. Easily distinguishable from any of the other small pelagic species by their obvious white tail tips.

**Antarctic Prion** *Pachyptila desolata*

The most numerous tubenose of the trip, it was seen daily around the South Georgia island and again during our trip south to the Antarctic. Smaller numbers were seen on the Drake Passage and in the Falklands area – although they can be very hard to distinguish from the next species.

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

This slighter, thin billed prion was seen around the Falklands, although it is very tough to identify it, even with photos that were taken of many birds. It mainly occurs north of the convergence zone.

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

Common on our first full sea day east of the Falklands, where a few gave good close-up views, but most remained distant.

**White-chinned Petrel (Vu)** *Procellaria aequinoctialis*

Seen on virtually all days especially mid ocean albeit never in large numbers and not around Antarctica itself.

**Sooty Shearwater (NT)** *Puffinus griseus*

Large numbers at sea on two days especially of the Falkland Islands, with smaller numbers on a few other days – but always near land.

**Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis*



We enjoyed good views of this distinctive species in fairly good numbers at sea around the Falklands.

### Storm Petrels Hydrobatidae

#### **Wilson's Storm Petrel**

*Oceanites oceanicus*

The commonest storm petrel of the trip, seen daily except in the Beagle channel on the first day and around the Falklands.

#### **Grey-backed Storm Petrel**

*Garrodia nereis*

Just a few participants managed to get views of one of the only 2 birds that were recorded from the ship as we cruised east to the Falklands.

#### **Black-bellied Storm Petrel**

*Fregetta tropica*

Recorded on at least 7 days of the tour, including some very good views. Biggest numbers during sea days on either side of South Georgia.

### Diving Petrels Pelecanoididae

#### **Magellanic Diving Petrel**

*Pelecanoides magellani*

3 birds were seen, showing their distinctive white collar on the first full day of the tour.

#### **Common Diving Petrel**

*Pelecanoides urinatrix*

The most frequently encountered Diving Petrel, seen on several occasions in small numbers, mainly around South Georgia and the Falklands, but also at sea between the two.

### Hérons Ardeidae

#### **Black-crowned Night Heron**

*Nycticorax nycticorax*

Around 6 birds were seen at a sea-cliff breeding colony at Gypsy cove. Another was seen in the Western Falklands the previous day.

### Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae

#### **Neotropical Cormorant**

*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

2 birds were seen briefly near Carcass Island.

#### **Rock Shag**

*Leucocarbo magellanicus*

This bird was seen along the beagle channel and at several sites in the Falklands.

#### **Imperial Shag**

*Leucocarbo atriceps*

Seen commonly in the Beagle Channel and around the Falklands.

#### **South Georgia Shag (E)**

*Leucocarbo georgianus*

Seen on all 3 days we had around South Georgia.

#### **Antarctic Shag (E)**

*Leucocarbo bransfieldensis*

Seen well on all days in the vicinity of the Antarctic Peninsula.

### New World Vultures Cathartidae

#### **Turkey Vulture**

*Cathartes aura*

Commonly seen at the Falklands especially around the Gypsy cove area and Carcass Island after we had 2 birds in the Beagle Channel on the first day.

### Caracaras & Falcons Falconidae

#### **Striated Caracara (NT, NE)**

*Phalcoboenus australis*

Known by the islanders as Johnny Rook, this Falklands near-endemic was seen very well on a few occasions on the Carcass and West Point Islands.

### Sheathbills Chionidae



**Snowy Sheathbill (E)***Chionis albus*

This inquisitive and endearing scavenger was seen in good numbers at each of our landings at South Georgia. First views were enjoyed when a few birds landed on the ship as we approached Gold Harbour on South Georgia.

**Oystercatchers Haematopidae****Magellanic Oystercatcher***Haematopus leucopodus*

This beautiful glossy black and white oystercatcher was seen along the shoreline near to Stanley in the Falklands after we had good numbers on the first Falklands day.

**Blackish Oystercatcher***Haematopus ater*

Just a few birds were seen on 2 days in the Falkland Islands.

**Plovers Charadriidae****Two-banded Plover***Charadrius falklandicus*

We had very good views of around 10 birds in the eastern Falklands, near Gypsy Cove.

**Sandpipers, Snipes Scolopacidae****South American Snipe***Haematopus leucopodus*

At least 4 of these very relaxed birds were seen at very close range in the Gypsy Cove area.

**White-rumped Sandpiper***Calidris fuscicollis*

Just a few birds were seen on 2 days in the Falkland Islands.

**Gulls & Terns Laridae****Dolphin Gull***Leucophaeus scoresbii*

Adults and juveniles of these beautifully marked birds were seen along the shoreline and quayside in Ushuaia as well as at the Falklands outside local tourist venues at Stanley.

**Kelp Gull***Larus dominicanus*

Seen commonly at most landing sites on the trip. Birds on the mainland, the Falklands and South Georgia were of the nominate *L. d. dominicanus* race, whereas birds seen on the Antarctic Peninsula were of the endemic *L. d. austrinus* race.

**South American Tern***Sterna hirundinacea*

Seen in good numbers in the Beagle Channel upon departure, at least a pair was also seen around the Gypsy Cove area.

**Antarctic Tern***Sterna vittata*

Seen very well daily on South Georgia and Antarctic Peninsula, with best views probably around the Grytviken area and during a Zodiac cruise in Larson Harbour in South Georgia.

**Skuas Stercorariidae****Chilean Skua***Stercorarius chilensis*

Only noted in small numbers in the vicinity of the port of Ushuaia.

**South Polar Skua***Stercorarius maccormicki*

Seen in reasonable numbers in the vicinity of the Antarctic Peninsula, especially towards the southern end of our trip, where several were seen harassing birds at penguin colonies. Most birds were of the intermediate or intermediate/dark morphs, but a few dark morph birds were present and presented challenges in separation from Brown Skua, especially as they are known to hybridise.

**Brown Skua***Stercorarius antarcticus*

Seen almost daily at sea and on shore. Birds seen on and on the close vicinity of the Falklands were Falklands Skua (*S. a. antarcticus*), whereas the balance seen in the vicinity of South Georgia, South Shetlands and Antarctic Peninsula were Subantarctic Skua (*S. a. lonnbergi*).



**Ovenbirds Furnariidae****Blackish Cinclodes (NE)***Cinclodes antarcticus*

This Falklands near-endemic was seen well and in large numbers at all 3 of our Falklands landings.

**Tyrant Flycatchers Tyrannidae****Dark-faced Ground Tyrant***Muscisaxicola maclovianus*

The endemic Falklands race (*M. m. macloviana*) was easily seen during our visits on the Falklands Islands.

**Wrens Troglodytidae****Grass Wren***Cistothorus platensis*

Seen very well on Carcass Island and again at least twice near Gypsy Cove on the Falklands.

**Cobb's Wren (E)***Troglodytes cobbi*

An endemic and endearing bird of the Falkland's, where it survives on rat-free islands – we had a great sighting right at our landing on Carcass Island.

**Thrushes Turdidae****Austral Thrush***Turdus falcklandii*

Seen in several locations in the Falklands, where it is common.

**Old World Sparrows Passeridae****House Sparrow (I)***Passer domesticus*

A number of birds were seen around Stanley.

**Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae****Correndera Pipit (E)***Anthus correndera*

We heard this bird in display near Gypsy Cove, before we had some great close sightings in the same area.

**South Georgia Pipit (E)***Anthus antarcticus*

This, the most southerly breeding passerine on earth, is highly sought after on South Georgia but due to rat infestations on the main island is very difficult to see. There were numerous birds that showed well in the Salisbury Plain area, where most participants enjoyed good views.

**Finches Fringillidae****Black-chinned Siskin***Spinus barbata*

This bright species was seen at all three landings we had in the Falkland Islands.

**New World Blackbirds Icteridae****Long-tailed Meadowlark***Sturnella loyca*

This easily recognised bird was seen very well during all 3 of our excursions during our visit to the Falklands and with its bright red chest was a favourite for many. This race, *S. l. falklandica*, is confined to the Falklands

**Tanagers & allies Thraupidae****White-bridled Finch***Melanodera melanodera*

This very bright species showed unbelievably well during our time in the Falklands, where best views were probably enjoyed at Carcass Island.



**MAMMALS ENCOUNTERED: 14 species****Eared Seals & Sea Lions Otariidae****South American Sea Lion***Otaria flavescens*

4 of these were seen on a jetty at the Port of Stanley, where they were very uninterested in any visitors that paid them attention.

**Antarctic Fur Seal***Arctocephalus gazella*

A few seen at sea on the way to South Georgia. On the island itself there were many exciting moments where we were charged by territorial bulls and had to fend them off. Highest numbers were seen at all the landings on South Georgia and we later only had single animals on the peninsula itself.

**Seals Phocidae****Southern Elephant Seal***Mirounga leonina*

Some participants had a single young animal on Carcass Island, while the rest of us caught up a few days later on South Georgia, where they greeted us at every landing. Especially at the Gold Harbour beach there were very large numbers lying around, always surprisingly relaxed and lethargic, although some young males could be seen sparring in the same area.

**Crabeater Seal***Lobodon carcinophagus*

Disappointingly only one or 2 animals were seen by some participants near the Antarctic Peninsula.

**Leopard Seal***Hydrurga leptonyx*

We enjoyed seeing a total of 5 of these well-known predators. First views were at Brown Bluff, while we had other animals during a Zodiac cruise in the Cierva Cove.

**Weddell Seal***Leptonychotes weddellii*

2 were seen in Larson Harbour on South Georgia, their northernmost site. A few others showed well later at Madder Cliffs and Trinity Island.

**Ocean Dolphins Delphinidae****Orca (Killer Whale)***Orcinus orca*

We were a little disappointed by sightings of this species – they were recorded from the ship on at least 4 days, although all sightings were brief and distant.

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

Seen on both days around the Falklands Islands, with a brief energetic display near West Point Island unfortunately not lasting long enough for most participants, although they were seen well off Gypsy Cove.

**Commerson's Dolphin***Lagenorhynchus obscurus*

We had a total of about 25 animals in the Western Falklands, where they gave us some amazing views on a number of occasions, including one pod that followed us to the Carcass Island beach landing.

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

One pod was seen on the first full day of sailing to the east of the Falklands.

**Rorquals Balaenopteridae****Humpback Whale***Megaptera novaeangliae*

The most commonly seen whale of the trip with many sightings on 10 days of the tour. There were a few periods where we enjoyed very high densities around the Antarctic Peninsula.

**Sei Whale***Balaenoptera borealis*

A few of these slightly smaller whales were seen north of the Antarctic Peninsula, including near Elephant Island.

**Fin Whale***Balaenoptera physalis*

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Around Elephant Island we had good numbers of these very large and fairly distinctive cetaceans, with small numbers during the preceding 2 days at sea.

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