

**ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO ANTARCTICA  
THE GREAT WHITE CONTINENT**  
*Cruise on the Akademik Ioffe*  
*Antarctica, South Georgia, The Falkland Islands & Argentina*  
*Escorted Wildlife & Photography Tour*

**01 – 24 FEBRUARY 2010**



**Leader: Simon Boyes**

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**with South Georgia, The Falklands & Argentina**  
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**A Personal Diary**

**Monday, 1 February**

We all meet up in Heathrow Terminal 3 for the afternoon flight to Madrid, in a British Airways Airbus. Here we transfer to Terminal 1 for the Aerolineas Argentinas 747 non-stop to Buenos Aires. It takes off on time at 2205.

**Tuesday, 2 February**

After 11 and a half hours in the air, we land over an hour early, at 0615. We are now three hours behind GMT, which is how it will stay throughout the tour. Mike and Wendy spot a Southern Caracara from the plane window as we taxi in. Immigration and money-changing are quick, and the luggage eventually arrives too. Once through customs, we meet birding guide Patricio, who has thoughtfully brought bottles of water for each of us. It's already hot and steamy outside the terminal, as we wait for the minibus and watch Chalk-browed Mockingbirds and both Grey-breasted and Brown-chested Martins. On the way into the city, we stop for a few moments for species such as Southern Lapwing, Field Flicker, Guira Cuckoo and Argentina's national bird, the Rufous Hornero, in the furnariid family.

Patricio points out some of the city's fine old buildings, in various classical styles. Our final turn is into a pedestrianized street where the Hotel Lafayette is situated. The rooms are all ready by 0900, and after an hour to shower, unpack and make a cup of coffee, we set off again for Costanera Sur. Rather than leave the birding to the afternoon, we decide to go sooner, as rain is forecast later. Patricio hands out picnic lunches which he has bought from nearby shops and packed individually. Costanera is a famous docklands reserve of lagoons and grasslands, with wide shaded paths popular with joggers. The wetlands are restored again after a two-year drought recently ended. We start with an elegant pair of Coscoroba Swans, one incubating. Yellow-winged and Chestnut-capped Blackbirds inhabit the reedbeds, and chase off the Shiny Cowbirds which lay eggs in their nests. These three are all members of the icterid family, which include the American orioles and meadowlarks. Patricio entices Freckle-breasted Thornbird and Black-and-Rufous Warbling Finch into view, with minimal use of playback. In the next hour the tally of duck species rises to nine, including the beautiful Ringed Teal and Brazilian Duck. Least expected is a female Black-headed Duck, the world's only parasitic duck, which lays eggs in nests of coot and other duck. The three species of coot take a little sorting out, and there are no birdless moments. After two hours we have walked only 300m and are ready for our picnic.

Noisy flocks of both Black-hooded and Monk Parakeets fly over at regular intervals. Rufous-bellied Thrushes are feeding hidden young, and a Red-crested Cardinal poses for photos. As drizzle sets in, Golden-billed Saltator, Blue-and-Yellow Tanager and Green-barred Woodpecker turn up. Adult and young Brazilian Cavies feed by the path: the cavy is a mouse-coloured guinea-pig, surprisingly confiding. As we gaze out over the wide, shallow expanse of the River Plate, the rain stops, and the warm east wind soon dries us. Glittering-bellied Emeralds are our first hummingbirds, both hovering at fast-forward speeds and motionless in the scopes. Along the track that makes the third side of our triangular walk, we enjoy Masked Yellowthroat, Double-collared Seedeaters and Fork-tailed Flycatchers. There is much else here too, but no room to list all that we see. We arrive back at the bus as more drizzle starts.

Back at the hotel, we have plenty of time to rest before a run through today's impressive bird-list and an early dinner.

**Wednesday, 3 February**

We leave at 0600 for a day to the north of the city, taking picnic breakfast and lunch with us, since Patricio showed us his catering skills yesterday. Our first stop is at Otamendi, a reserve 70 km from town. It is

mostly marshland with gallery forest in the flood-plain of the great Parana River, which becomes the Plate downstream where it meets the Uruguay River. Snail Kites and Chimango Caracaras are the common raptors, with the occasional Long-winged Harrier gliding past. Skeins of White-faced Ibis fly over us all day, usually in V-formation, reaching well into four figures. Bare-faced Ibis are regular too, but only in pairs or small groups. Recent rains have filled the marshes and made the road muddy – in fact we spend the morning dodging the showers. Brown-and-Yellow Marshbirds are abundant, singing in flight and forming large flocks. There are excellent views of Giant Wood-Rails, including one watched at length in the scopes; later, two slightly smaller Grey-necked Wood-Rails cross the road. The marshes hold various skulkers which give us good views: Wren-like Rushbird and Curve-billed Reedhaunter for example. Spectacled Tyrants perch up on reed-tops, and both Epaulet Oriole and Hooded Siskin show themselves well. As we approach the river, the scrub turns into gallery forest. Here Solitary Cacique, Spix's Spinetail, Diademed Tanager and Ultramarine Grosbeak appear, among much else. One Gilded Sapphire makes a change from the similar Glittering-bellied Emeralds, which is the common hummingbird here. Our final Otamendi speciality is a brilliant Scarlet-headed Blackbird.

After a rest stop at a service station, we cross the huge bridge over the Parana River and enter Entre Rios Province. A stop at a riverside camp-site makes a good place for our excellent picnic lunch, with a selection of *empanadas* (resembling Cornish pasties) and other pastries to try. Here are also White-winged Becard and a large, spotted Tegu Lizard. We arrive at our second destination, Ceibas, soon after 1500. This is an area of dry thorn forest and open wetlands. Normally we would arrive earlier and spend longer here, but Patricio has heard that the usual circular track is inundated, and only the first section accessible. The dry forest produces a fascinating flock of Lark-like Brushrunners, crested furnariids which gather together on tree-trunks and on the ground. Two impressive woodcreepers, Scimitar-billed and Narrow-billed, appear one after the other. Chotoy Spinetail, both cardinal species, White Monjita, Vermilion Flycatcher and Cattle Tyrant (one on a sheep's head) appear in quick succession. Overhead fly two Savanna Hawks, followed by Rosy-billed Pochard, Ringed Teal, egrets, Maguari Storks and two Fulvous Whistling Duck. The turn-around point is a bird-filled flooded pasture with two Southern Screamers amid hundreds of wetland birds of many different species. The screamers, huge and heavy marshbirds, are feeding intently with heads mostly down. Hugo drives us at good speed across the pampas as we head for home, arriving back at the hotel at 1930. Glasses of local red wine and *Quilmes* beer adorn the dinner table as we recall an exciting and bird-filled day.

#### **Thursday, 4 February**

Breakfast is at a civilized 0800 as we need not leave the hotel until 0930. The flight to Ushuaia is from the local airport Aeroparque, only 20 minutes away. Saying farewell to driver Hugo and the excellent Patricio, we wait for our plane. As it arrives late from its previous journey, we take off an hour late. We are in the air for just over three hours, before circling over the Beagle Channel and landing in the beautifully situated airport of Ushuaia, with its backdrop of steep snow-covered mountains, rising to 1450m. Here we retrieve our luggage and meet Marcelo, our birding guide for our short time here. We check into our warm rooms at the Tolkeyen Hotel, which is magnificently located on the shore of the channel, with sea visible from all our windows.

An hour or so outside introduces us to many of the common Patagonian coastal species, and to a chilling west wind. There are Blackish and Magellanic Oystercatchers, on the shore with Kelp Geese, Fuegian Flightless Steamer Duck, Crested Duck, Kelp and Dolphin Gulls. Several Chilean Skuas fly past. Waders comprise Rufous-chested Dotterel and many groups of restless White-rumped Sandpipers, huge migrants as they breed in the Arctic. Offshore three less overweight steamer-ducks are of the other species: Flying, with female more distinctive than male. We all comment on the extreme dimorphism of the Kelp Geese, with pure white male and barred, black female. A Great Grebe swims close offshore. The *Nothofagus* forest begins immediately behind our rooms, and holds parties of Black-chinned Siskin, with a few Austral Thrushes, another furnariid named Thorn-tailed Rayadito, White-crested Elaenia and a brilliant Patagonian Sierra-Finch.

Our dinner is booked in town by One Ocean Expeditions, who are chartering the ship and running the cruise. It is an opportunity to meet expedition leader Andy Prossin, one or two of the expedition staff, and some of our fellow passengers. We head back to the Tolkeyen, full of expectations about the days ahead.

#### **Friday, 5 February**

A pair of Ashy-headed Geese and a Black-crowned Night Heron are outside the hotel before breakfast, in addition to the species we saw here yesterday. Breakfast is much enjoyed, since the dining room has panoramic views of the Beagle Channel on three sides. Leaving our luggage at the hotel for collection by the ship's agents, we set off with Marcelo at 0830 for a day in the Tierra del Fuego National Park. The weather is dry and calm: high summer in Ushuaia.

Black-faced Ibis are feeding on the green of the world's most southerly golf-course, with an impressive backdrop of snowy peaks. The national park is a stunningly beautiful mosaic of *Nothofagus* forest, lakes, rivers, glacial valleys and distant panoramas. The first walk reveals a skulking pair of Magellanic Tapaculos, like squash balls on legs, hopping as wrens might do on or near the ground. The forest is mostly quiet, but delightful to walk in with its mosses, lichens and orchids. At the next stop, Marcelo's *iPod* brings in an Austral Pygmy Owl, which in turn is mobbed by White-crested Elaenia. Tufted Tit-Tyrant and Fire-eyed Diucon (another tyrant) are in the same area. A ditch provides feeding habitat for a juvenile Plumbeous Rail, which stays to offer us all good views. On the way to Lapataia Bay, which marks the end of the road and the Chilean border, a shout from Christine gives us the special moment of the day. A male Magellanic Woodpecker is feeding on the ground right by the bus, with scarlet crest catching the morning sun. It is hammering away at a stump, oblivious of us even when we pile out of the door. After the photographers have taken a few shots, it flies across the road to join its mate and fledged young. We stay with them for several minutes, adding to our memory-card portfolio. One picture of Marcelo's is a full frame portrait of just the head. At the bay, a Bar-winged Cinclodes feeds along a muddy ditch; and both steamer duck species have young ducklings. An Austral Parakeet flies over the forest, showing long rusty tail.

For our picnic, we sit on the bank of a river, and enjoy Marcelo's catering. Two Andean Condors soar over the peaks beyond the river, which we can follow in the scope as their spirals are so slow. Next surprise is a flock of eight Spectacled Duck, a comparatively rare duck in a genus of its own. Next to them a Great Grebe incubates on a raised nest of sticks and grasses in the channel of a shallow river. We have time to watch and compare two creeper-like furnariids, Thorn-tailed Rayadito and the less common White-throated Treerunner in an especially mature part of the forest. The final stop is at the top of town, where a pair of Chiloe Wigeon are in residence on a small lake. The town gardens are photogenic with multi-coloured lupins. Sergio drives us to the cruise meeting point, where we say our farewells to him and the larger-than-life Marcelo. We are transferred to the quay a very short distance on a different coach, to begin our 18-day sojourn on the *Akademik Ioffe*. She is a Finnish vessel, built in 1989, named after a Russian nuclear physicist, and owned by a Russian shipping company.

Soon we are installed in our cabins, and welcomed by the friendly multi-national staff. There is a safety briefing before dinner, and we meet some of the other passengers, mostly from Australia, UK, USA and Canada. We have to wait for a few late passengers, and finally start the voyage at 2300. This delay costs us a likely sighting of the Magellanic Diving Petrel, which (on this itinerary) only usually occurs in the Beagle Channel!

### **Saturday, 6 February**

Mike, Wendy, Tim and I form the early watch from the bows, soon after full daylight at 0600. The mainland of Tierra del Fuego is still visible to port, but we are making good progress eastwards towards the Falkland Islands. The *Ioffe* is stable and almost silent, having been built as a research vessel into hydrological acoustics. She has a Russian captain, and predominantly Russian crew. Black-browed Albatross and Southern Giant Petrels are the most abundant large seabirds; but we also have visits from several of the great Albatross: Wandering as well as Southern and Northern Royal. These majestic seabirds have a wingspan of 3.5m, dwarfing the 2.5m of the Black-browed. Four Peale's Dolphins swim energetically towards our bow, but soon move on.

After breakfast, the great albatross disappear for the rest of the day, but in their place come impressive numbers of Sooty Shearwaters, with increasing visits from Greater Shearwaters, White-chinned Petrels, Wilson's Storm Petrels and various prions. Their identification is notoriously difficult, with three species possible here. While land is still in sight, a few South American Terns, two Imperial Shags and two Chilean Skuas fly past. The day passes pleasantly, with spells on deck alternating with meals, presentations and mandatory briefings (on the Antarctic Treaty and the use of zodiacs). Today is Katharine's birthday, and at dinner her slice of chocolate gateau is adorned by a single candle.

## **Sunday, 7 February**

At sunrise the sea is a mass of Common Diving Petrels, all flying past us from stern to bow. There are also hundreds of Slender-billed Prions, and a retinue of 50 or more Black-browed Albatross, all gliding on our port side, adjusting their speed to ours. After half an hour not one diving petrel is visible – we must have passed their favourite feeding grounds. As we pass by the south side of Westpoint Island, one of the furthest north-west of the Falklands, penguins appear ahead of us: Magellanic and Rockhopper (at rest on the water), and Gentoos (porpoising away from us). Red-backed Hawk and Turkey Vulture fly over the hills. Among tussock above the shore, a few South American Sealions are resting, with pairs of Magellanic Penguins standing as if on sentry duty. Rock Shags and Imperial Shags fly over the ship.

After breakfast, we make a landing at the jetty in the beautiful bay by the farmstead. It is our first zodiac operation, and all runs smoothly. Kelp Geese and Falkland Flightless Steamer Duck have young along the shore, both goslings and ducklings about half-grown. A brisk and windswept walk takes us over the island's grassy ridge to the mixed albatross and penguin colony on the far side. The albatross are Black-browed, and the penguins Rockhoppers. Parting the tussocks in front of us, we look down on a fantastic spectacle immediately below us. The two species are mixed in together, with albatross chicks up on platform nests which are in fact the hearts of long-dead tussocks. The penguin chicks are standing all around, moulting their downy feathers into their first waterproof coat. Both species have had a good breeding season, with many fat chicks. The albatross fly in from time to time, often with a crash landing, to regurgitate more fish to their grey downy young. A few pairs that have failed are still on territory on their nest, mating and adding more mud to the platform – but they will not lay again until next year. This busy scene keeps all the photographers happy for a half-hour or more – none happier than the Discovery Channel film-crew on board. As we walk back to the jetty, the sun emerges and instantly brightens the scene. It remains almost cloudless all the rest of the day – serious sun-burning weather. A pair of dark Peregrines dash over the jetty, one in full hunting mode.

During another tasty lunch, we reposition to nearby Carcass Island, where for a while we fail to find an anchorage, thanks to the strong wind. Finally we anchor off Leopard Beach, a lovely sandy strand on the east coast. The zodiacs take us in to shore again, and leave us three hours to wander round beach and interior. A pair of obliging Commerson's Dolphins follow one of the zodiacs into the shallows, and delight the photographers with repeated leaps out of the water. The burrow-nesting Magellanic Penguins have many fledged chicks dotted around, and each minute more adults arrive on the beach from the sea. The large Gentoos colony has also done well, with many full-grown chicks moulting out of their down coats. Among them is a lone, lost King Penguin, head and shoulders above its companions. There are several pairs of Ruddy-headed Geese among the larger Upland Geese, and two Paraguayan Snipe, posing for photos in the tussock. On the beach a male Black-throated Finch appears by our side, and the Blackish Cinclodes (called Tussockbird locally) are everywhere, even at our feet. Carcass is a rat-free island (unlike Westpoint), allowing ground-nesting birds like the Tussockbird to nest in peace. Waders are represented by a well-camouflaged Two-banded Plover spotted by Tim, and by both oystercatcher species. Our last bird in the tussock by the beach is a Grass Wren: another new bird, but not the hoped-for endemic Cobb's Wren. We take the last zodiac back to ship at 1900, and have plenty of wildlife highlights to talk over at dinner.

## **Monday, 8 February**

Dawn birds are literally thousands of Sooty Shearwaters dispersing from their roosts and streaming past the ship. A few Black-browed Albatross and Southern Giant Petrel are visible too. A male Orca, with long dorsal fin, passes the starboard side. Just before anchoring in Stanley harbour, many Magellanic Penguins can be seen standing on beaches and grassy slopes near the water. After breakfast we return to the dining room to pack up our own chosen combinations for a lunch picnic. Some passengers book a coach outing to Gypsy Cove, but we opt for a walk about town, starting with a stroll along the seafront to the museum. There are point-blank photos to be had of several species: Falkland Flightless Steamer Duck, Kelp Geese, Blackish Oystercatcher, and a group of Southern Giant Petrels which are congregating around a pipe discharge, perhaps from a fish factory. Turkey Vultures look out of place soaring over the rooftops of the town. One wrecked ship has roosting Black-crowned Night Herons and nesting Rock Shags taking advantage of shelter from the strong west wind. The museum is always well worth a visit. Now there is a new exhibit in the garden: an Antarctic hut filled with items from its last occupancy in 1958. Known as the Reclus Hut, I visited it at Portal Point at 64°S on a cruise in 1995. After sharing our packed lunches with the Dolphin Gulls at picnic tables along the shore, we walk uphill and inland, and soon find Correndera Pipit and Rufous-

chedsted Dotterel on the peat bogs just beyond the by-pass. So end two very successful two days of Falklands birding.

We have a refueling delay before we can start the long crossing to South Georgia. We have to go alongside a tanker in the outer harbour, but the day's strong winds have meant a queue of ships has built up. The expedition staff put on a number of presentations and a film to help pass the time, but most of the passengers are just happy to rest a little after Falklands exertions. Such is the nature of expedition cruising.

### **Tuesday, 9 February**

Once the bunkering process is complete, we start the engines at 0600. The first wildlife of note is a feeding frenzy of Sooty Shearwaters, with a few Peale's Dolphins associating with them. Throughout the morning Grey-backed Storm-Petrels become a familiar sight, pattering on the surface of the open sea or on patches of kelp, where they like to feed. Next appears the first of many Soft-plumaged Petrels, distinctive with white breasts and dark underwing, and an erratic flight reminiscent of a nighthawk's. Over the whole day, they number over a hundred. There are three Grey Petrels, of which one stays around the bows for lengthy observation. Both these petrels nest further north, on South Atlantic islands. Most of today's great Albatross are Wandering, but one Northern Royal appears as well. Several of the Wanderers stay with the ship for long periods, checking the wake for any edible items. The usual retinue of the most common Scotia Sea species, such as Southern Giant Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Black-browed Albatross and Wilson's Storm-Petrel are never far away.

Three satisfying meals and a few presentations help most of the passengers to pass the time: we hear from biologist Antje about penguins, and Ira talks about improving our polar photography.

### **Wednesday, 10 February**

Two new birds turn up before breakfast: Black-bellied Storm-Petrel and a Northern Giant Petrel, with dark red bill-tip, which follows in the wake and approaches close. There are also five Wanderers with us most of the morning. At breakfast we wish Christine a happy birthday, and head out on deck again. The bridge-wings, two decks above our usual spot on the bows, are another good vantage point. As we head south and the temperature drops, we favour the bridge-wings more and more. Derek makes a presentation about cetaceans in the meeting room on deck 1. During lunch, we are all busy enjoying another good meal, when a Blue Whale and a Kerguelen Petrel appear together, both rarely seen and both captured on camera by two passengers. By the time we rush back out on deck the sea is decorated with hundreds of Antarctic Prions like a snowstorm. A Fin Whale appears just off the bow, showing a rolling back and dorsal fin. Our first Grey-headed Albatross passes by. The sudden burst of activity indicates that we have crossed the Antarctic Convergence, where upwelling from the cold current occurs as it hits the warmer seas further north. All three storm petrels stay with us all afternoon – Wilson's and Black-bellied are expected, but the Grey-backed are far from their usual nesting sites in Falkland.

### **Thursday, 11 February**

Our first Cape Petrel circles the ship a few times before breakfast. During the morning, Grey-headed Albatross become a more frequent sight, and our first icebergs appear. Most of them are huge, square, tabular bergs which have broken off the Larsen Ice-shelf in the Weddell Sea. Wind and currents have carried them northwards, and now they are gradually melting. In the bright midday sunshine they look magnificent. All shapes and sizes are here: some eroded by months of wave-action into rounded, corrugated lumps, and plenty of brash ice and bergy-bits (surprisingly a technical term) which have calved from the huge bergs. The first Light-mantled Albatross flies past at lunchtime. At any time of day, many Antarctic Prions are in view: often hundreds together like a snowstorm. We estimate we have seen over ten thousand today.

During the afternoon mountains loom out of the mist, and we reach Elsehul, a cove suitable for a zodiac cruise when swells permit. Unfortunately, today the 2.5 metre swell is too much to let us off the ship, as the north-west wind is blowing straight into the cove. Instead, we are happy out on deck with a mass of wildlife around us. Grey-headed Albatross nest in a colony on grassy slopes above the cove: several rest on the water by the ship with a few Black-browed for comparison. Also with them is a single Light-mantled Albatross, bathing, taking off and eventually flying over the ship as we drift too close. South Georgia Shags, similar to the Imperial of Ushuaia and Falklands but with shorter bill, appear in the water. We press on eastwards, along the north coast, for the Bay of Isles. The density of prions and White-chinned Petrels is remarkable,

and there are always Albatross (often a Wanderer or two) around the ship. Twenty or more diving petrels cross our bows, flying fast and straight, Little Auk-like. Close examination of photos taken of them show they are Common rather than the less abundant South Georgia Diving Petrel, which has a paler underwing. Anchoring off Salisbury Plain, we watch Wandering Albatross on their nests on Prion Island on the port side. To starboard, the colony of King Penguins is visible through binoculars. Andy, our expedition leader, makes a sudden decision to launch the zodiacs, for a quick landing before dinner.

Almost all the passengers jump at the chance, even though the light is fading. The swell on the shore defeats us, but at least we manage a 45 minute zodiac cruise along the beach. The King Penguins are lined up in their thousands, resting, preening and uttering their braying calls while others assemble in the surf and leap ashore. Antarctic Tern and South Georgia Pintail fly over, but we will hope for better views tomorrow. The backdrop of glaciers and snowy peaks is stunning, and gives us our first taste of the majesty and wildness of this remote island. Sarah, the hotel manager, pushes back dinner for an hour for us.

### **Friday, 12 February**

Sunrise is at 0400 now, as we have sailed so far east of Ushuaia. Ten Common Diving Petrels have landed on the foredeck during the night, disorientated by the lights of the ship. They are carefully handled and thrown back over the bows. The old rusting whaling station of Grytviken is set out at the head of the bay, with only the white-painted church and museum looking cared-for. A Snowy Sheathbill, our first, flies around the ship after breakfast. We take a short zodiac ride to the beach by the cemetery, where many huge, moulting Elephant Seals lie together for warmth. The tussock around us has many romping fur seal pups. King Penguins stand on the shore in small groups, non-breeders but just here to moult. Historian Ray and bar-tender Diego pour out tots of rum for us, to drink a toast to Sir Ernest Shackleton, who died here in 1922 and is buried in the small whalers' cemetery. We walk round the old whaling station, where many of the old blubber tanks and pumping equipment still stand as a rusty monument to a dark age in the history of the southern oceans. South Georgia's six whaling stations processed 175,000 great whales from 1904 to 1964. The only reason for the cessation was that it was no longer profitable – the few remaining whales were too small. We walk up a hill to look down upon the settlement and to imagine the foul-smelling scene and the bay red with blood. Now we have fresh air, on a lovely sunny and clear morning.

Two buildings are beautifully restored: the church, built in 1913 by the Norwegian whalers, and the museum, formerly the station manager's house. There is also a post-office, where postcards and South Georgia stamps are popular with the passengers. A short walk towards the British Antarctic Survey base at King Edward Point reveals a few Antarctic Terns, Brown Skuas, Kelp Gulls and South Georgia Shags. One tern has food for a recently fledged chick. The South Georgia Pintails are also ridiculously confiding, allowing us a close approach on the track ahead of us, and later feeding in the shallows. Although not officially split yet from the mainland Yellow-billed Pintail, this form is ecologically and morphologically quite different, being much smaller and having unique carnivorous habits. After a much enjoyed morning, we return to the ship for a fine pasta buffet lunch.

Now we steam round to Fortuna Bay, with the intention of offering a long hike to those who wish: in fact the final part of the famous route taken by Shackleton, Crean and Worsley in 1916 to get help for the crew of the *Endurance*, stranded on Elephant Island. However, Andy is dismayed to find another ship anchored in the bay, with passengers visiting the King Penguin colony that we are scheduled to visit! Ships in Antarctica and South Georgia must follow an itinerary laid out months before, but the *Delphin* is making an unregulated visit. So, we are forced to find Plan B, which turns out to be a landing at Stromness Whaling Station, where Shackleton knocked on the door of the manager's house and was given food and shelter. An alternative is a zodiac cruise round Grass Island, which has recently been cleared of rats. Since South Georgia Pipits have returned to nest here, we have a chance to try for views of the world's most southerly passerine. In the event, the heavy cloud, late hour, and kelp-beds keeping us away from the shore makes pipit-finding impossible. Consolations are Sheathbills, Antarctic Terns, and nesting White-chinned Petrels flying repeatedly overhead. Young fur seals are in the water in vast numbers, inquisitively watching their first ever zodiacs. The hikers return after dark, having made the best use of every minute of daylight. They come across herds of Reindeer, introduced by Norwegian whalers a century ago, and now due to be eradicated (if and when funds permit).

## **Saturday, 13 February**

We approach Gold Harbour for an extended morning landing. This is a huge King Penguin colony stretching along the beach, at the foot of an impressive glacier. We can walk to the edge of the colony, where courting (with necks elegantly entwined), mating, incubating, and feeding well-grown young can all be observed. The biology of a King Penguin colony is complicated: there are eggs (mostly out of sight, on the feet of the parent), newly hatched young (invisible in the centre of the colony) and last year's young (fully grown, still in brown down) all together. No other species has such an extended breeding season. The 12 months of dependency includes a complete fast for the chicks from May to September, when fish stocks are low. A huge Elephant Seal shuffles laboriously past, only narrowly missing the incubating penguins. The cleaning department is busy too: many skuas, giant petrels and sheathbills are in attendance. Gentoos also have a colony in the tussock behind the beach. Here two hungry, downy chicks pursue their parents in a race for more food. They are more active than the fully grown King chicks. A Light-mantled Albatross flies along the crags above the beach, its wedge-shaped tail giving a distinctive shape. Fur seals are everywhere, mostly pups, making mock-attacks on us, but easily deterred by a few hand-claps. As at Grytviken, there is a wallow of huge, moulting Elephant Seals, including a few young bulls. Two of them raise their necks against each other in a blubberous fight, practising for more serious fights to come. A Brown Skua lands on Christine's head and takes her green hat, which is acrobatically rescued by a leaping Derek, the staff naturalist! Wendy catches the scene on camera.

After lunch the plan for a zodiac cruise at Cooper Bay is foiled by strong winds. The sea between the bay and the island of the same name is a snowstorm of Antarctic Prions: thousands in the air, evenly spaced over the waves, and thousands more resting on the water. They are just a few of the 22 million pairs estimated to nest on South Georgia. Their diet includes tiny items of cephalopods, gastropods, and small fish, plucked from the surface, but mostly consists of young krill, the basis of the Antarctic ecosystem. From prion to Humpback, krill is the staple diet. Penguins are porpoising around us too, mostly Macaronis, but also a few Chinstraps (our first), looking white-faced in comparison with the Macaronis. A few Kings and Gentoos also appear: Cooper Bay has all four species nesting. Failing to take to the zodiacs, our consolation is a spectacular cruise of the vertical scenery of the Drygalski Fjord in bright sunshine. The towering mountains and huge glaciers are equally impressive and photogenic. Snow Petrels start to appear over the icebergs that have calved from the huge glacier at the top of fjord, and eventually a small flock come close in to the bows. Large numbers of Antarctic Terns and Cape Petrels are feeding immediately below the snout of the glacier: the petrels swimming and the terns hovering above them. As we turn the ship, the wake disturbs the snout and causes a thunderous calving of tons of ice. Immediately the terns and petrels fly to the new food source caused by the upwelling of nutrients.

In early evening we reach open sea and leave South Georgia. We are escorted by thousands more prions – no exaggeration – which keep pace exactly with us and are visible for hours through every window and porthole. What a rich ecosystem is this one.

## **Sunday, 14 February**

.....is a quiet sea day, with few special birds as we head south-west towards the South Orkneys. Two Snow Petrels fly past among numerous Antarctic Prions, but even giant petrels and Black-browed Albatross are few and far between. One Wandering Albatross – a stage 5 bird according to Harrison's drawings – passes by. Before reaching full adult plumage, these albatross go through many moults, in seven recognizable stages. Both storm petrels and White-chinned Petrel fly past regularly. One Brown Skua at midday is far from land in either direction. As for marine mammals, the keen whale watchers have to make do with brief views of the fins of Fin and Sei Whales during the morning. In the afternoon the temperature drops to 1°C and snow begins to fall. There are lectures on geology and early Antarctic exploration, as well as a showing of one of the *Life in the Freezer* documentaries.

## **Monday, 15 February**

The Shackleton theme continues as we celebrate the great explorer's 136<sup>th</sup> birthday! In mid-morning we reach Laurie Island, in the South Orkneys. There is an Argentine scientific station here, Orcadas, which has the distinction of being the longest continuously-manned station in the Antarctic continent. Now they carry out meteorological work and studies on petrels and penguins. We are made welcome (by radio) to land and visit the base, but the heavy swell on the shore prevents any zodiac activity. Wildlife is abundant as we cruise along the rugged shores: among the Black-browed Albatross are a few Grey-headed and Light-

mantled; the Southern Giant Petrels include one of the pure white morph; and the impressive icebergs have many Chinstrap Penguins using them as perches. The shores are lined with Antarctic Fur Seals, whose population explosion continues unabated. Ten years back they were just on the beaches: now we can see them far up the snow-covered slopes. As fur seals eat mostly krill, their increase has followed the decimation of the great whales in these waters. During the afternoon a Fin Whale surfaces near our bows, and we have a constant retinue of Cape Petrels. Wendy and Tim spend some time trying to photograph their dappled plumage from the stern deck. Unlike any other petrel we have seen, they always travel round in gangs, often flying up the port side and investigating the bows, before returning en masse to the wake. Snow Petrels rarely follow ships, but we often have a few in sight: and a few are with us for most of the day. Andy, Sarah, Carolina and the other staff make sure we are kept entertained and well fed throughout the day.

### **Tuesday, 16 February**

We start with a wonderful morning of abundant wildlife and calm, sunny weather! Before breakfast, many Blue Petrels appear, often with Antarctic Prions. They are prion-like, but the dark cap and white tip of tail is distinctive. The gangs of Cape Petrels are now joined by Southern Fulmars. The fulmars are with us all morning, often in rafts of a hundred on the water. A single Light-mantled Albatross, a pale juvenile, flies round the bows several times. All morning we are passing beautiful icebergs, some tabular ones calved from an ice-shelf, and others of a deep blue. These have come from glaciers, where the blue ice has been compressed and had the air squeezed out of it. The bergs are of every imaginable shape and size. A few serve as perches for penguins and petrels. We circle two bergs which are roosts of hundreds of Antarctic Petrels, a species that is easy to miss on this itinerary. At times we have these beautiful petrels flying close to us on the bows, often accompanied by Cape Petrels. The only identified penguins are Chinstraps, which porpoise, rest on the water or stand on bergs, often on steep slopes. The morning's other excitement are the whales: Minke, Fin and Humpback. The Humpbacks appear to starboard just as lunch is announced, and feed right next to the ship.

The afternoon features two major encounters that we will all remember for years. First is a magnified version of the Antarctic Petrel encounter. We divert to port to visit a berg that is covered with thousands of them. As we approach, we see there are over a thousand Snow Petrels, white against white, also perched on top with the Antarctic. The iceberg itself is a fantastic sculpture in blue and white in itself, eroded by waves on all sides. As the ship makes a turn to the far side of the berg, a dense flock of white wings rises from the surface: many more thousands of Antarctic Petrels! For five minutes, both species are flying all round the ship at all levels, confusing the photographers. This is a moulting phenomenon, featuring young birds and failed breeders. Next month numbers are likely to increase as the nesting season finishes for successful breeders. For a few days, these petrels may become flightless, and so they choose a huge berg to rest on. It is such an unexpected and overwhelming Antarctic experience that I note the co-ordinates: Latitude 62° 56' 22 S; Longitude 52° 05' 44 W. The other encounter is with a large pod of Orcas, which we follow for 45 minutes. There are at least 15, including one long-finned male. They give repeated views of their striking black-and-white pattern as they surface on all sides of the ship. Each major appearance is greeted by excitement from the passengers, as we watch from the bows, bridge, bridge-wings, and top deck too. Today may have been another sea-day, but there is a special buzz around the dinner table.

At dusk, at 2100, we reach the edge of the pack-ice, and sail along it. Our first Adelie Penguins watch us pass by as they stand on the closest bergs.

### **Wednesday, 17 February**

Our programme is foiled by ice: heading for Paulet Island, at the north end of the Weddell Sea, we are turned back by the edge of the pack ice – masses of broken pieces of berg that have flowed north with currents from deep in the Weddell. This ice barrier is unusual at this season, and it continues to frustrate us most of the day. The ice penetrates most of the way across the Bransfield Strait, and sends us towards the South Shetlands, while we want to aim south-west along the west side of the Antarctic Peninsula. However, it has its consolations: all morning Humpback Whales, usually in pairs, are feeding along the ice edge, often giving spectacular views alongside the ship. Small numbers of Antarctic and Snow Petrels fly past at regular intervals. Albatross are down to three all day: two Black-browed and one very southerly Grey-headed. During the early morning, one or two Adelie Penguins stand on the floes; later, a few Chinstraps take over.

During the afternoon, the sun shines and transforms the Bransfield Strait into an ice-covered wonderland: a few Crabeater and Weddell Seals appear on the floes among the more numerous Fur Seals. Andrew Lock lectures on Antarctic research and the political claims of the various nations involved.

Our navigation takes us so close to the South Shetlands that in the end Andy decides to give us all a leg-stretch. So, after an early dinner, we go ashore at the Chilean base of Eduardo Frei on King George Island. This is quite a town, with church, school and airstrip. While we are ashore, a Chilean air force transporter takes off for Punta Arenas. Most of the passengers are given a chance to explore the station, and post letters. The rest of us are allowed to visit a Gentoo colony on a nearby beach. The chicks are well fed and fully grown, many chasing their parent for another feed. Others lie lethargically, losing heat on rocks, or stand moulting into their first waterproof plumage. There are a few Chinstraps among the Gentoos. A short walk brings us to an Antarctic Tern colony, which takes to the air en masse as a Brown Skua flies over. A lone Antarctic Shag flies past as we are in the returning zodiac.

### **Thursday, 18 February**

We are blessed with almost cloudless skies all day – unusual for this part of Antarctica. During the morning we steam south, past Deception Island, and into the Gerlache Strait. For the second day running, we see over 20 Humpbacks in the form of their bushy blows and humped backs with short, knob-like fins. Andy asks the Captain to steer us over to a group of six in a small area by some magnificent bergs. Here we go round and round in tight circles, very slowly, as they repeatedly feed and surface close to us. The first half-hour is with four similarly-sized 'teenagers:' not fully grown, all blowing and diving in a line. As they move off in one direction, a mother and calf appear, and produce still more excitement as the mother uses the ship, quite literally, as a scratching post. She frequently surfaces alongside us as we watch, enthralled, from all the decks. Those on deck 3 are close enough to be dampened by her breath as she exhales. Often she swims under the ship and sends us all from port to starboard for more views and photos. Those with long lenses complain that they're too close. Subsequent photos show that the mother has barnacles, some opened – long and pink – around her mouth. We go into lunch exhilarated by the hour-long encounter. There are a pod of Orcas too – never so obliging – but all the same allowing us to approach to within a hundred metres.

In the afternoon we arrive at Graham Passage, a narrow channel between the Antarctic continent and Bluff Island. Here we step into zodiacs for a memorable cruise around the icebergs of the channel, with sunshine illuminating the vast landscapes of the high mountains all around. Andrew Lock, our zodiac driver, explains that in parts the continent has a coat of compressed snow and ice four kilometres thick. The Crabeater Seals, Antarctic Shags, Antarctic Terns, Gentoo Penguins and Kelp Gulls are almost incidental to the majesty of the scene, but they all form great foregrounds for our photos. One Ocean Expeditions, Andy's charter company that is operating the cruise, has brought kayaks on board: here (and elsewhere in the next few days) the 15 kayakers have a calm and spectacular venue to explore.

During dinner we reposition to Portal Point, the original site of the hut we visited in Stanley ten days ago. Here there is a sunset landing of great beauty overlooking the berg-filled bay, and the chance for passengers (who wish to do so) to stay a night on shore in tents or bivvy-bags. Like the kayaks, the camping option is a feature of One Ocean, part of Andy's philosophy to make the Antarctica experience more adventurous.

### **Friday, 19 February**

As Katharine and Wendy return from the night's camping on the Antarctic continent, a Leopard Seal appears around their zodiac, and grins menacingly at them. The campers are especially glad of hot coffees and breakfasts back on board. The morning's zodiac cruise is at Wilhelmina Bay, a lovely spot off the Gerlache Strait, especially under cloudless skies again. We see Minkes and Humpbacks from the ship as we arrive, but unfortunately they don't appear close to the zodiacs as hoped for. So the cruise is more for scenery than wildlife, though we enjoy the Antarctic Shags, porpoising Gentoos, Crabeater Seals and Antarctic Terns. Derek, driving our zodiac close to a beautiful large berg, manages to destabilize it and turn it onto its side with a small tsunami.

Lunch is a memorable barbecue on the stern deck, with mulled wine and a gateau to follow. The temperature is 7°C in the shade, but windless and feeling far warmer in the sun. One passenger wears a Hawaiian short-sleeved shirt. It remains warm as we weigh anchor and steam south while we eat in the most scenic restaurant imaginable. The wind-chill increases when we reach the main waters of the Gerlache Strait, and

head into a 25 knot wind. Luckily the sun remains with us for the zodiac cruise and landing at Orne Harbour. Here we meet our first close-up Weddell Seal, and nesting Shags and Chinstraps on the rocks. We make a landing on rocks by the main Chinstrap highway, where these sturdy and hard-working penguins climb hundreds of metres over the snow to nest high up on the crags above. They choose such sites since they become snow-free early in the season and allow nests to be built with a few pebbles to keep the two eggs off the ground. They hatch around Christmas, and are now fledging their one or two surviving young. They are great to watch as they come to land, with a vertical jump onto the beach. Those heading out to sea are wary, only entering the water ten or more at a time, for fear of Leopard Seals. Fur Seals have colonized the beach too, and keep us from wandering in any direction. They are encroaching on the small Gentoo colony just above the beach, their numbers escalating dangerously for the other Antarctic wildlife. Fur seal culling is often mentioned as ecologically desirable, but with no demand for their pelts now, who would finance it? Other passengers choose a long hike with Everest-climber Andrew Lock, or a short zodiac cruise. Eventually we are all back on board to enjoy another excellent dinner.

### **Saturday, 20 February**

Neko Harbour is our destination this morning, only a short distance from our overnight anchorage in the Errera Channel. This is a beautiful landing, close to a huge glacier, with a Gentoo colony. It is also our furthest south point, at 64° 50'S. A huge Weddell Seal in on shore as the zodiacs arrive. First we spend time at sea level, watching penguins arrive on the beach from the sea, while others pluck up courage to launch themselves into the shallows. On the beach are two strangers in the colony: adult Adelie Penguins, freshly moulted, which will have arrived from colonies further south. Next we climb a short distance up a rocky hillside to the edge of the colony itself, where creches of healthy chicks are entertaining to watch. Some chase parents, to encourage them to regurgitate for them. Others are moulting into their first waterproof plumage. Many are lying flat out on a rock, flippers outstretched, trying to lose heat as this is a warm day for them, with their downy coats. In two or three weeks, most will be ready for their first swim. One pair of chicks, only half grown, show the size difference caused by the immediate incubation of the first egg: one hatches three or four days before the other. Another unfortunate adult is still further behind with nesting: it is brooding a newly hatched chick and an egg. The egg is unlikely to hatch as it is not being properly incubated: and the chick has no chance of surviving the winter. Now we join Andrew Lock for a climb through the snow field above the colony, reaching a rocky outcrop with a stupendous view over glacier, bay, ship, all illuminated by our third consecutive sunny day. Our parkas are much too hot for us as we climb.

After lunch back on board and a short repositioning, we take to the zodiacs for the last excursion of the voyage: a landing on Cuverville Island. On the way there, we have a beautiful cruise between yet more fantastically shaped icebergs of all shapes and sizes. This is the largest Gentoo colony in the region, with an estimated 4,300 pairs. The Gentoos have had a good breeding season here too, with large creches of chicks dotted about. Elsewhere, particularly in the shelter of large rocks or cliffs, adults congregate to moult. Another single Adelie is lying on the stony beach near a pile of whale bones. This one is a juvenile, also freshly moulted, which would have hatched in late November and fledged at the end of January. Since then it must have swum successfully several miles north. The island also has large population of skuas: some we study in the scope are pale headed, lacking streaking, and consistent with South Polar Skua. The taxonomic situation is complicated by the fact that at this latitude, there is limited interbreeding between Brown and South Polar. These birds look significantly different from the larger, more round-headed and streaked birds of the South Shetlands and north end of the peninsula.

We return to the ship via a zodiac cruise which takes us past breeding Kelp Gulls, Antarctic Terns and Antarctic Shags. The latter have well grown, dark chicks approaching fledging. In the mud room we take off our rubber boots for the last time, and prepare for the (normally) rougher seas of the Drake Passage. Our Antarctic experience has been blessed with hours and hours of calm, sunny weather, surpassing our wildest hopes.

### **Sunday, 21 February**

Following last night's Antarctica party in the bar, the ship is a quiet place this morning. The Drake is a 'lake' rather than a 'shake': no angry swells and the gentlest of breezes. Small numbers of the two storm petrels, Black-browed Albatross and a few Chinstraps on the water are our first sightings. Later, Grey-headed and Light-mantled Albatross fly past, and a single Brown Skua. But the lack of birdlife is surprising, especially when we cross the Antarctic convergence into warmer waters. Here there is a fog bank that reduces visibility

for much of the afternoon. The day passes enjoyably all the same, as we work on our photos and journals and attend presentations and an Antarctic quiz in the bar after dinner. Tim's victorious team wins a bottle of champagne.

### **Monday, 22 February**

Black-browed Albatross and Sooty Shearwaters are the common birds of the day as we complete the Drake Passage, with rarely even a white-capped wave visible all crossing. Some passengers claim to be disappointed to miss out on the stormy Drake experience, but most of us are quite happy. It does make for quieter bird life though – we could count giant petrels on the fingers of one hand, and only two Wandering Albatross pass by. At lunchtime we arrive at Cape Horn, and navigate to within three miles of the most southerly tip of South America, graveyard of sailing ships for centuries. Now all looks peaceful at the small Chilean outpost by the lighthouse. We turn east and begin to meet Imperial Shags and Chilean Skuas as we approach the mouth of the Beagle Channel. The pilot is not due on board until 0200, and so after the Captain's dinner we anchor for a few hours.

### **Tuesday, 23 February**

At dawn we dock in Ushuaia, having voyaged 3,600 nautical miles. After saying farewell to all the expedition staff, we have a coach to take us to the airport, to check in our luggage for the flights home. Our idea is to spend two or three hours walking and birding along the nearby beach, but the chilling west wind and drizzle discourages us. At least we enjoy various duck, geese and waders before admitting defeat. Once back in the warmth of the airport café, a Black-chested Buzzard Eagle flies right past us. The afternoon flight to Buenos Aires is on time, and connects with the overnight flight to Madrid.

### **Wednesday, 24 February**

In Madrid, we collect our luggage, and transfer by coach to Terminal 4. The London flight is delayed by a tyre that needs changing, but our arrival at Heathrow is only an hour late. We say our farewells by the carousels, before our completing our journeys home.

### **Acknowledgements**

Antarctica is special! Luckily we had a fine expedition team on the *Ioffe* to make it even more memorable. Special thanks are due to Andy Prossin, a very calm, authoritative and friendly expedition leader, to naturalists Carolina Mantella, Derek Kyostia and Antje Steinfurth, and to all the rest of the team. Thanks to Captain Gennadi Poskoniy, his officers and crew for a safe voyage, and to the Russian sailors who helped us on and off zodiacs in all weathers and swells. Many thanks also to Sarah Burns for leading the hotel team on board with such a keen eye for detail.

In Argentina, thanks are due to Patricio Ramirez and to Marcelo, excellent bird guides in Buenos Aires and Ushuaia, and to drivers Hugo and Sergio. Finally and most of all, thanks to you all who participated in the cruise. I appreciated all your enthusiasm and good humour throughout. I hope we may meet up on another Ornitholiday again soon. Thanks also to Tim Carr and Wendy Lofthouse for the photos that illustrate this report.

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April 2010

## Itinerary and Weather

- 01 Feb Depart Heathrow 1430. Depart Madrid 2205.
- 02 Feb Arrive Buenos Aires 0615. Costanera Sur.  
Cloudy, some drizzle. 28°C (82°F)
- 03 Feb Buenos Aires. To Otamendi and Ceibas.  
Mostly cloudy and showers. 25-29°C (77-84°F)
- 04 Feb Buenos Aires to Ushuaia.  
Buenos Aires: cloudy, 27°C (81°F);  
Ushuaia: fine, strong W wind, 7°C (45°F)
- 05 Feb Ushuaia. Tierra del Fuego National Park. Board ship.  
Dry, some sun, calm, 5-8°C (41-46°F)
- 06 Feb Scotia Sea.  
Dry, mostly cloudy, 9°C (48°F)
- 07 Feb West Falkland Islands: Westpoint and Carcass.  
Dry, mostly sunny, windy, 9°C (48°F)
- 08 Feb Port Stanley.  
Cloudy, strong W wind. 9°C (48°F)
- 09 Feb Scotia Sea.  
Cloudy, dry, strong N wind. 9°C (48°F)
- 10 Feb Scotia Sea.  
Mostly sunny, 8°C (46°F)
- 11 Feb Scotia Sea. South Georgia: Elsehul and Salisbury Plain.  
Mostly sunny, NW wind. 7°C (45°F)
- 12 Feb South Georgia: Grytviken and Stromness.  
Some sun, drizzle in pm. Strong NW wind. 6°C (43°F)
- 13 Feb South Georgia: Gold Harbour, Cooper Bay and Drygalski Fjord.  
Mostly sunny, W wind. 4-6°C (39-43°F)
- 14 Feb Scotia Sea.  
Cloudy, snow in evening. 1°C (34°F)
- 15 Feb Scotia Sea. South Orkneys: Laurie Island.  
Cloudy, E wind. -1°C (30°F)
- 16 Feb Scotia Sea.  
Sunny morning, calm. -1°C (30°F)
- 17 Feb Bransfield Strait. Eduardo Frei Chilean Station, King George Island (South Shetlands).  
Calm, sunny, 0-4°C (32-39°F)
- 18 Feb Gerlache Strait. Graham Passage and Portal Point.  
Sunny, 4°C (39°F)
- 19 Feb Portal Point. Wilhelmina Bay and Orne Harbour.

Sunny, 1-7°C (34-45°F)

20 Feb Errera Channel. Neko Harbour and Cuverville Island.  
Sunny, 3-7°C (37-45°F)

21 Feb Drake Passage.  
Calm, cloudy, 2-7°C (36-45°F)

22 Feb Drake Passage. Cape Horn.  
Calm, cloudy, 2-9°C (36-48°F)

23 Feb Ushuaia. Strong W wind, drizzle, 7°C (45°F)  
Buenos Aires. Sunny, 26°C (79°F)

24 Feb Arrive Madrid 1320. Arrive Heathrow 1850.

**CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN IN ARGENTINA (before and after the cruise)**

<b>No of days recorded</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Abundance Scale</b> (max. seen on 1day)
	B = Buenos Aires, Otamendi & Ceibas	1 = 1 – 4 individuals
	U = Ushuaia & Tierra del Fuego N.P.	2 = 5 - 9
		3 = 10 - 99
		4 = 100 - 999
		5 = 1000 - 9999

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>No of Days recorded</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Abundance Scale</b>	<b>SCIENTIFIC NAME</b>	
Great Grebe	2	U	1	<i>Podiceps major</i>	
Southern Giant Petrel	1	U	1	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	
Neotropic (Olivaceous) Cormorant	2	U	1	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>	
Rock Shag	2	U	1	<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>	
Rufescent Tiger-Heron	1	B	1	<i>Tigrisoma lineatum</i>	
Black-crowned Night-Heron	1	U	1	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	
Whistling Heron	1	B	1	<i>Syrigma sibilatrix</i>	
Snowy Egret	2	B	4	<i>Egretta thula</i>	
White-necked (Cocoi) Heron	1	B	1	<i>Ardea cocoi</i>	
Great Egret	3	B	3	<i>Ardea (Egretta) alba</i>	
Cattle Egret	1	B	2	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	
Striated Heron	1	B	1	<i>Butorides striatus</i>	
Bare-faced Ibis	2	B	4	<i>Phimosus infuscatus</i>	
White-faced Ibis	1	B	5	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	
Black-faced Ibis	1	U	2	<i>Theristicus melanopis</i>	
Maguari Stork	1	B	2	<i>Ciconia maguari</i>	
Southern Screamer	1	B	1	<i>Chauna torquata</i>	
White-faced Whistling-Duck	2	B	3	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	
Fulvous Whistling-Duck	1	B	1	<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	
Coscoroba Swan	1	B	1	<i>Coscoroba coscoroba</i>	
Black-necked Swan	1	B	2	<i>Cygnus melanocorypha</i>	
Upland Goose	2	U	3	<i>Chloephaga picta</i>	
Kelp Goose	3	U	2	<i>Chloephaga hybrida</i>	
Ashy-headed Goose	1	U	1	<i>Chloephaga poliocephala</i>	
Ringed Teal	2	B	3	<i>Callonetta leucophrys</i>	
Crested Duck	3	U	3	<i>Lophonetta specularioides</i>	
Flying Steamer Duck	3	U	2	<i>Tachyeres patachonicus</i>	
Fuegian Flightless Steamer Duck	2	U	3	<i>Tachyeres pteneres</i>	
Spectacled (Bronze-winged) Duck	1	U	2	<i>Speculanas specularis</i>	
Cinnamon Teal	1	B	2	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>	
Chiloe Wigeon	1	U	1	<i>Anas sibilatrix</i>	
Silver Teal	2	B	3	<i>Anas versicolor</i>	
Speckled Teal	5	B	U	2	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>
Yellow-billed Pintail	4	B	U	3	<i>Anas georgica</i>
Rosy-billed Pochard	2	B	3	<i>Netta peposaca</i>	
Brazilian Duck	2	B	1	<i>Amazonetta brasiliensis</i>	
Black-headed Duck	1	B	1	<i>Heteronetta atricapilla</i>	
Black Vulture	1	B	1	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	
Andean Condor	1	U	1	<i>Vultur gryphus</i>	
Snail Kite	1	B	3	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>	
Long-winged Harrier	1	B	1	<i>Circus buffoni</i>	
Savanna Hawk	1	B	1	<i>Buteogallus meridionalis</i>	
Black-chested Buzzard Eagle	2	U	1	<i>Geranoaetus melanoleucus</i>	
Roadside Hawk	1	B	1	<i>Buteo magnirostris</i>	
Southern (Crested) Caracara <sup>1</sup>	4	B	U	3	<i>Caracara plancus</i>
Chimango Caracara	4	B	U	3	<i>Milvago chimango</i>
Dusky-legged Guan	1	B	1	<i>Penelope obscura</i>	
Gray-necked Wood-Rail	1	B	1	<i>Aramides cajanea</i>	
Giant Wood-Rail	1	B	2	<i>Aramides ypecaha</i>	
Plumbeous Rail	1	U	1	<i>Pardirallus sanguinolentus</i>	

White-winged Coot	1	B	1	<i>Fulica leucoptera</i>	
Red-gartered Coot	1	B	1	<i>Fulica armillata</i>	
Red-fronted Coot	1	B	1	<i>Fulica rufifrons</i>	
Limpkin	1	B	1	<i>Aramus guarauna</i>	
Wattled Jacana	1	B	1	<i>Jacana jacana</i>	
Blackish Oystercatcher	3		U	1	<i>Haematopus ater</i>
Magellanic Oystercatcher	2		U	2	<i>Haematopus leucopodus</i>
White-backed (South American) Stilt	2	B		3	<i>Himantopus melanurus</i>
Southern Lapwing	5	B	U	3	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>
Rufous-chested Dotterel	1		U	1	<i>Charadrius modestus</i>
Paraguayan (South American) Snipe	1		U	1	<i>Gallinago paraguaiae</i>
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	B		1	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>
White-rumped Sandpiper	3		U	3	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>
Chilean Skua	2		U	2	<i>Stercorarius chilensis</i>
Dolphin Gull	3		U	3	<i>Larus scoresbii</i>
Kelp Gull	3		U	3	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
South American Tern	1		U	1	<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>
Rock (Feral) Pigeon ( <i>introduced</i> )	4	B	U	3	<i>Columba livia</i>
Picazuro Pigeon	2	B		3	<i>Columba picazuro</i>
Spot-winged Pigeon	1	B		2	<i>Columba maculosa</i>
Eared Dove	2	B		3	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>
Picui Ground-Dove	2	B		2	<i>Columbina picui</i>
White-tipped Dove	1	B		1	<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>
Nanday (Black-hooded) Parakeet	1	B		3	<i>Nandayus nenday</i>
Austral Parakeet	1		U	1	<i>Enicognathus ferrugineus</i>
Monk Parakeet	2	B		3	<i>Myiopsitta monacha</i>
Guira Cuckoo	2	B		2	<i>Guira guira</i>
Austral Pygmy-Owl	1		U	1	<i>Glaucidium nanum</i>
Glittering-bellied Emerald	2	B		2	<i>Chlorostilbon aureoventris</i>
Gilded Sapphire	1	B		1	<i>Hylocharis chrysur</i>
Checkered Woodpecker	1	B		1	<i>Picoides mixtus</i>
Green-barred Woodpecker <sup>2</sup>	2	B		2	<i>Colaptes melanochloros</i>
Field Flicker	1	B		1	<i>Colaptes campestris</i>
Magellanic Woodpecker	1		U	1	<i>Campephilus magellanicus</i>
Bar-winged Cinclodes	3		U	1	<i>Cinclodes fuscus</i>
Dark-bellied Cinclodes	1		U	1	<i>Cinclodes patagonicus</i>
Rufous Hornero	3	B		3	<i>Furnarius rufus</i>
Thorn-tailed Rayadito	2		U	3	<i>Aphrastura spinicauda</i>
Chotoy Spinetail	1	B		1	<i>Schoeniophylax phryganophila</i>
Spix's (Chicli) Spinetail	1	B		1	<i>Synallaxis spixi</i>
Freckle-breasted Thornbird	2	B		1	<i>Phacellodomus striaticollis</i>
Wren-like Rushbird	1	B		1	<i>Phleocryptes melanops</i>
Curve-billed Reedhaunter	1	B		1	<i>Limnornis curvirostris</i>
Lark-like Brushrunner	1	B		2	<i>Coryphistera alaudina</i>
White-throated Treerunner	1		U	1	<i>Pygarrhichas albogularis</i>
Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper	1	B		1	<i>Drymornis bridgesii</i>
Narrow-billed Woodcreeper	1	B		1	<i>Lepidocolaptes angustirostris</i>
Magellanic Tapaculo	1		U	1	<i>Scytalopus superciljaris</i>
White-winged Becard	1	B		1	<i>Pachyramphus polychropterus</i>
White-crested Elaenia	2		U	1	<i>Elaenia albiceps</i>
Small-billed Elaenia	1	B		1	<i>Elaenia parvirostris</i>
Sooty Tyrannulet	1	B		1	<i>Serpophaga nigricans</i>
White-crested Tyrannulet	1	B		1	<i>Serpophaga suberistata</i>
Tufted Tit-Tyrant	1		U	1	<i>Anairetes parulus</i>
Bran-colored Flycatcher	1	B		1	<i>Myiophobus fasciatus</i>
Vermilion Flycatcher	1	B		1	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>
Fire-eyed Diucon	1		U	1	<i>Pyrope pyrope</i>
White Monjita	1	B		1	<i>Xolmis irupero</i>
Austral (Rufous-backed) Negrito <sup>3</sup>	2		U	1	<i>Lessonia rufa</i>
Spectacled Tyrant	1	B		1	<i>Hymenops perspicillata</i>
Cattle Tyrant	1	B		1	<i>Machetornis rixosus</i>
Yellow-browed Tyrant	1	B		1	<i>Satrapa icterophrys</i>
Tropical Kingbird	2	B		3	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>

Fork-tailed Flycatcher	2	B		2	<i>Tyrannus savana</i>
Streaked Flycatcher	1	B		1	<i>Myiodynastes maculatus</i>
Great Kiskadee	2	B		3	<i>Pitangus sulphuratus</i>
Gray-breasted Martin	1	B		3	<i>Progne chalybea</i>
Brown-chested Martin	2	B		3	<i>Progne tapera</i>
Chilean Swallow	2		U	2	<i>Tachycineta meyeni</i>
Blue-and-White Swallow	1	B		1	<i>Notiochelidon cyanoleuca</i>
Barn Swallow	1	B		1	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Southern House Wren <sup>4</sup>	2	B	U	1	<i>Troglodytes musculus</i>
Masked Gnatcatcher	2	B		1	<i>Polioptila dumicola</i>
Rufous-bellied Thrush	2	B		3	<i>Turdus rufiventris</i>
Austral Thrush	2		U	3	<i>Turdus falcklandii</i>
Creamy-bellied Thrush	2	B		2	<i>Turdus amaurochalinus</i>
Chalk-browed Mockingbird	2	B		3	<i>Mimus saturninus</i>
Masked Yellowthroat	2	B		1	<i>Geothlypis aequinoctialis</i>
Sayaca Tanager	1	B		1	<i>Thraupis sayaca</i>
Blue-and-yellow Tanager	1	B		1	<i>Thraupis bonariensis</i>
Diademed Tanager	1	B		1	<i>Stephanophorus diadematus</i>
Patagonian Sierra-Finch	2		U	1	<i>Phrygilus patagonicus</i>
Black-and-Rufous Warbling-Finch	2	B		1	<i>Poospiza nigrorufa</i>
Blue-black Grassquit	1	B		1	<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>
Double-collared Seedeater	1	B		2	<i>Sporophila caerulescens</i>
Saffron Finch	2	B		2	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>
Great Pampa-Finch	1	B		1	<i>Embernagra platensis</i>
Yellow-billed Cardinal	1	B		1	<i>Paroaria capitata</i>
Red-crested Cardinal	2	B		1	<i>Paroaria coronata</i>
Rufous-collared Sparrow	5	B	U	3	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>
Grayish Saltator	1	B		1	<i>Saltator coerulescens</i>
Golden-billed Saltator	1	B		1	<i>Saltator aurantiirostris</i>
Ultramarine Grosbeak <sup>5</sup>	1	B		1	<i>Cyanocompsa brissonii</i>
Solitary Cacique	1	B		1	<i>Cacicus solitarius</i>
Epaulet Oriole	1	B		1	<i>Icterus cayanensis</i>
Yellow-winged Blackbird	1	B		3	<i>Chrysomus thilius</i>
Chestnut-capped Blackbird	1	B		3	<i>Chrysomus ruficapillus</i>
Brown-and-Yellow Marshbird	1	B		3	<i>Pseudoleistes virescens</i>
Bay-winged Cowbird	2	B		3	<i>Molothrus badius</i>
Scarlet-headed Blackbird	1	B		1	<i>Amblyramphus holosericeus</i>
Shiny Cowbird	2	B		3	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>
Hooded Siskin	1	B		3	<i>Carduelis magellanica</i>
Black-chinned Siskin	3		U	2	<i>Carduelis barbata</i>
House Sparrow ( <i>introduced</i> )	4	B	U	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

- |   |                             |                                                                                                                                           |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Southern (Crested) Caracara | This is a recent split from Crested Caracara ( <i>C. cheriway</i> ) of Central and North America, now usually known as Southern Caracara. |
| 2 | Green-barred Woodpecker     | This form is now usually lumped with Golden-breasted Woodpecker.                                                                          |
| 3 | Austral Negrito             | Rufous-backed Negrito has been split into Austral Negrito ( <i>L. rufa</i> ) and Andean Negrito ( <i>L. oreas</i> ).                      |
| 4 | Southern House Wren         | House Wrens south of Mexico are often split from Northern House Wren ( <i>T. aedon</i> ).                                                 |
| 5 | Ultramarine Grosbeak        | When seen at Otamendi, this bird was mistakenly called Blue Grosbeak.                                                                     |

## MAMMALS

Brazilian Cavy (Guinea Pig)	2	B		3	<i>Cavia aperea</i>
European Rabbit ( <i>introduced</i> )	1		U	2	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>

**OTHER ANIMALS** included Tegu Lizard (*Tupinambis tegu*).

**CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING THE CRUISE**

<b>No of days recorded</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Abundance Scale</b> (max. seen on 1 day)
	T = Tierra del Fuego	1 = 1 – 4 individuals
	F = Falkland Islands	2 = 5 - 9
	G = South Georgia	3 = 10 - 99
	A = Antarctica, including South Shetlands	4 = 100 - 999
	S = At Sea	5 = 1000 – 9999
		6 = 10,000 – 99,999

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>No of Days recorded</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Abundance Scale</b>	<b>SCIENTIFIC NAME</b>
King Penguin	4	F G	6	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>
Gentoo Penguin	9	F G	A S 5	<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>
Adelie Penguin	3		A 3	<i>Pygoscelis adeliae</i>
Chinstrap Penguin	8	G	A S 4	<i>Pygoscelis antarctica</i>
Rockhopper Penguin	1	F		<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>
Macaroni Penguin	3	G		<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>
Magellanic Penguin	4	F	S 4	<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>
Wandering Albatross	8	G	S 3	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>
Northern Royal Albatross <sup>1</sup>	2		S 1	<i>Diomedea sanfordi</i>
Southern Royal Albatross <sup>1</sup>	1		S 1	<i>Diomedea epomophora</i>
Black-browed Albatross	15	F G	A S 4	<i>Diomedea melanophris</i>
Grey-headed Albatross	8	G	A S 4	<i>Diomedea chrysostoma</i>
Light-mantled Albatross	6	G	S 2	<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>
Southern Giant Petrel	17	F G	A S 4	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>
Northern Giant Petrel	6	G	S 1	<i>Macronectes halli</i>
Southern Fulmar	4		A S 4	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
Antarctic Petrel	2		A S 6	<i>Thalassoica antarctica</i>
Cape (Pintado) Petrel	8	G	A S 4	<i>Daption capense</i>
Snow Petrel	5	G	A S 5	<i>Pagodroma nivea</i>
Soft-plumaged Petrel	3		S 4	<i>Pterodroma mollis</i>
Blue Petrel	1		S 3	<i>Halobaena caerulea</i>
Antarctic Prion	9	G	S 6	<i>Pachyptila desolata</i>
Slender-billed Prion	3	F	S 3	<i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>
Grey Petrel	2		S 1	<i>Procellaria cinerea</i>
White-chinned Petrel	9	F G	S 4	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>
Great Shearwater	4	F	S 3	<i>Puffinus gravis</i>
Sooty Shearwater	6	F	S 5	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>
Grey-backed Storm-Petrel	3		S 3	<i>Oceanites nereis</i>
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	15	F G	A S 3	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>
Black-bellied Storm-Petrel	10	G	A S 3	<i>Fregetta tropica</i>
Common Diving Petrel	8	F G	S 4	<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>
Rock Shag	4	T F		<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>
Antarctic Shag <sup>2</sup>	4		A 3	<i>Phalacrocorax bransfieldensis</i>
South Georgia Shag <sup>2</sup>	3	G		<i>Phalacrocorax georgianus</i>
Imperial Shag	5	T F	S 3	<i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i>
Black-crowned Night-Heron	2	F		<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Upland Goose	2	F		<i>Chloephaga picta</i>
Kelp Goose	2	F		<i>Chloephaga hybrida</i>
Ruddy-headed Goose	1	F		<i>Chloephaga rubidiceps</i>
Crested Duck	2	F		<i>Lophonetta specularioides</i>
Falkland Flightless Steamer Duck	2	F		<i>Tachyeres brachypterus</i>
South Georgia Pintail <sup>3</sup>	3	G		<i>Anas georgica</i>
Turkey Vulture	2	F		<i>Cathartes aura</i>
Red-backed Hawk	1	F		<i>Buteo polyosoma</i>
Striated Caracara	1	F		<i>Phalcoboenus australis</i>
Peregrine	1	F		<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Magellanic Oystercatcher	1	F		<i>Haematopus leucopodus</i>
Blackish Oystercatcher	2	F		<i>Haematopus ater</i>
Rufous-chested Dotterel	1	F		<i>Charadrius modestus</i>
Two-banded Plover	1	F		<i>Charadrius falklandicus</i>

Paraguayan (South American) Snipe	1	F				1	<i>Gallinago paraguaiiae</i>	
Snowy Sheathbill	4		G	A		3	<i>Chionis alba</i>	
South Polar Skua	2			A		2	<i>Stercorarius maccormicki</i>	
Brown Skua <sup>4</sup>	13	F	G	A	S	3	<i>Stercorarius antarctica</i>	
Chilean Skua	3	T			S	3	<i>Stercorarius chilensis</i>	
Dolphin Gull	4	T	F			3	<i>Larus scoresbii</i>	
Kelp Gull	12	T	F	G	A	3	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	
South American Tern	5	T	F		S	2	<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>	
Antarctic Tern	9			G	A	S	4	<i>Sterna vittata</i>
Arctic Tern	2			G		S	1	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Blackish Cinclodes (Tussockbird)	1	F				3	<i>Cinclodes antarcticus</i>	
Dark-faced Ground Tyrant	2	F				2	<i>Muscisaxicola macloviana</i>	
Chilean Swallow	1	F				1	<i>Tachycineta leucopyga</i>	
Grass Wren	1	F				1	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>	
Austral Thrush	1	F				1	<i>Turdus falcklandii</i>	
Correndera Pipit	1	F				1	<i>Anthus correndera</i>	
Long-tailed Meadowlark	2	F				1	<i>Sturnella loyca</i>	
House Sparrow ( <i>introduced</i> )	1	F				3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	
Black-throated Finch	1	F				1	<i>Melanodera melanodera</i>	
Black-chinned Siskin	2	F				2	<i>Carduelis barbata</i>	

#### TAXONOMIC NOTES

- 1 Northern and Southern Royal Albatross are now usually considered separate species.
- 2 Both Antarctic and South Georgia Shags are recent splits from Imperial Shag.
- 3 South Georgia Pintail is not yet officially given full specific status; but will surely be soon. See my comments under Friday 12 February (above).
- 4 Brown Skua: skua taxonomy is currently under debate. The preferred treatment by Olsen and Larsson (1997) lumps as subspecies the forms *lonnbergi* (seen in Antarctica and South Georgia) and *antarctica* (seen in Falklands). Another treatment, by Sibley & Monroe (1993), gives them full specific status.

#### MAMMALS

Antarctic Fur-Seal	11		G	A	S	4	<i>Arctocephalus gazella</i>
South American Sea-Lion	2	F				1	<i>Otaria flavescens</i>
Crabeater Seal	4			A		3	<i>Lobodon carcinophagus</i>
Leopard Seal	1			A		1	<i>Hydrurga leptonyx</i>
Weddell Seal	2			A		1	<i>Leptonychotes weddelli</i>
Southern Elephant Seal	2		G			3	<i>Mirounga leonina</i>
Peale's Dolphin	3	T	F		S	1	<i>Lagenorhynchus australis</i>
Hourglass Dolphin	2				S	1	<i>Lagenorhynchus cruciger</i>
Commerson's Dolphin	2	F				1	<i>Cephalorhynchus commersoni</i>
Orca (Killer Whale)	3	F		A	S	3	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
Antarctic Minke Whale	3			A	S	2	<i>Balaenoptera bonaerensis</i>
Fin Whale	4				S	1	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>
Humpback Whale	5			A	S	3	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
Reindeer (introduced)	1		G			3	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



**Antarctic Petrels**



**Black-browed Albatross**



**Magellanic Penguin**



**Rockhopper Penguin**



**Falkland Flightless Steamer Duck**



**Wandering Albatross**



**Humpback Whale**



**Elephant Seal & King Penguins**



**Graham Passage**



**Magellanic Woodpecker**



**Orcas**



**White-chinned Petrel**



**Gentoo Penguin**



**Brown Skua attack**

**Cover photograph: Drygalski Fjord**

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