



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Antarctica, The Falklands, and South Georgia

8th to 26th January 2010



Trip report compiled by tour leader: Trevor Hardaker

Tour Summary

As per usual, this year's trip to one of the ultimate wildlife destinations in the world proved to meet everyone's expectations in terms of the fantastic encounters we experienced. It was an enthusiastic group that boarded the *MV Plancius* in Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world, to begin their trip to destinations that most people only dream about.

As we headed out of Ushuaia into the Beagle Channel in the late afternoon, the first birds of the trip were already being enjoyed, with coastal species such as Rock and King Shags, and our first pelagic species, including Chilean Skua, Sooty Shearwater and the majestic Black-browed Albatross.

Our trip across to the Falkland Islands was a great introduction to the fantastic array of seabirds that inhabit these southern oceans. It gave us the opportunity to get to know the subtle differences between Northern and Southern Giant Petrels, enjoy the spectacular Cape Petrel as well as Great

Shearwater and Slender-billed Prion, and to pick out the minute Wilson's, Black-bellied and Grey-backed Storm Petrels over the vast ocean surface. We were also treated to some of the largest avian inhabitants of the ocean, with regular visits to the ship by Wandering and both Northern and Southern Royal Albatrosses. Mammals also added to the entertainment, with Fin Whales and Peale's Dolphins being enjoyed by most, whilst an interesting selection of lectures were offered for those wanting to learn more about our first destination.

Our introduction to the wildlife of the Falklands took place at Westpoint Island, where we had barely landed before spotting attractive Upland and Kelp Geese and Blackish Oystercatchers, with Striated Caracaras investigated us from overhead. Spirits were high when we connected with our first of the island's two endemics, Falkland Steamer Duck, and it was not long before we were enjoying Austral Thrush, Black-chinned Siskin, Correndera Pipit and the attractive Long-tailed Meadowlark. However, the stars of the show here were at a cliff top seabird colony known as *Devil's Nose*, where we reveled in the sights of hundreds of nesting Black-browed Albatrosses intermingled with the incredibly cute Western Rockhopper Penguins, whilst Subantarctic Skuas constantly hung overhead hoping for an opportunistic meal. Observing the interactions of these birds from the edge of this colony was quite incredible; from the amusing penguins comically hopping around from rock to rock, to the dazzling aerobatics of the albatrosses as they effortlessly soared around.



The afternoon saw us landing at another of the outer islands, Carcuss Island, where, within minutes of arriving, we located the second endemic, Cobb's Wren, now restricted to only a few of the outer islands because of predation from introduced rats and cats. We spent the rest of the afternoon slowly meandering along the coastline and enjoying close interactions with the stunning Magellanic Oystercatcher, a few Ruddy-headed Geese, inquisitive Blackish Cinclodes and Dark-faced Ground Tyrants, the sought-after White-bridled Finch, as well as South American Snipe.

We were also invited back to the home of one of the locals, where an absolute feast of sweet treats had been laid out for us; and, for a short while, everyone forgot that they were on a birding trip and tucked into the incredible delights that were on offer.

No visit to the Falklands is complete, however, without a visit to the capital, Port Stanley, one of the major sites of the 1982 Anglo-Argentine war for control of the islands. Landing here, we made our way past the wreckage of the *Lady Elizabeth* before exploring Gypsy Cove. Whilst taking in a bit of history about the islands and the war, we enjoyed the lovely Magellanic Penguins along the way, and also added Crested Duck and Two-banded Plover to our growing list. The quaint village of Stanley offered us some cultural interests such as the War Museum, the Government House and the picturesque Christ Church Cathedral, whilst there were plenty of souvenir shops to cater for the shopping needs of the group.

Leaving the Falklands, we headed out in a south-easterly direction and were soon enjoying the birds of the open ocean again. Our journey was somewhat slowed down due to some less than ideal weather, and it meant that we had to spend an additional day travelling in order to reach our next destination. Nevertheless, this did not dampen the spirits, and, in between many interesting lectures on board, we spent countless hours scanning the open oceans to see what we could find. We watched as the composition of the birdlife changed with Slender-billed Prions now replaced by

Antarctic Prions, and Black-browed Albatrosses becoming less abundant with increasing sightings of Grey-headed Albatrosses in its place. We also had our first introduction to the absolutely stunning Light-mantled Albatross, whilst the weather conditions were being particularly enjoyed by the smaller petrels that included Soft-plumaged, Kerguelen and Atlantic. Several leaping pods of the delightful Hourglass Dolphin also wowed the group.

Approaching the archipelago of South Georgia, we made our way into Cumberland Bay where the captain steered the ship into the south-eastern corner, allowing us an up close and personal view of the Nordenskjold Glacier. Cruising in the area, we saw our first Antarctic Terns, South Georgia Shags and South Georgia Diving Petrels, while most passengers enjoyed the antics of porpoising Gentoo and Macaroni Penguins close to the ship.

Our first landing was at Grytviken, an old disused whaling station and also home to the final resting place of the intrepid explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton. After paying tribute to Shackleton with the traditional toast of rum and calling in at the small museum and shop, it was very difficult to keep ignoring the incredible wildlife that was all around us. Regal King Penguins gathered in small groups to inspect us, the localized carnivorous subspecies of Yellow-billed Pintail provided close up views, and Snowy Sheathbills fed around our feet, totally ignoring our presence.

Antarctic Fur Seals were also in abundance, some a little overly friendly at times, while huge Southern Elephant Seals lazed about on the beaches without hardly moving. Back on the ship, the staff had prepared a wonderful barbeque, a really novel experience eating out on the back deck with the picturesque South Georgia as a backdrop!



The following morning our proposed landing in Fortuna Bay had to be called off due to high winds, so we instead cruised around, taking in the three main whaling stations on the island. Our first station was at Stromness (the site of Shackleton's rescue) where we were able to see some of the Reindeer that have been introduced to South Georgia. Then it was on to Husvik and, finally, to Leith, which was the biggest whaling station of its time, housing some 400 people. We then continued on in a northerly direction, with another cruise into Antarctic Bay and then Possession Bay, where we saw the Purvis Glacier which lies just to the north of the famous Shackleton Gap. This is where Shackleton, Worsley and Crean came down the glacier and realized they were lost, so went all the way back up and continued south along the main divide. Obviously, the birding hadn't stopped, and we were enjoying species like Northern Giant and White-chinned Petrels, Antarctic Prion, Gentoo and Macaroni Penguins, and Wandering, Black-browed, Grey-headed and Light-mantled Albatrosses all along the way.

Our afternoon landing was at Salisbury Plain and, amongst the passengers, was rated as one of the absolute highlights of the trip. We were set ashore in a colony of several hundred thousand King Penguins, many of them fluffy brown chicks often even larger than the adults, and got to spend a few hours taking in this incredible spectacle. The attendant Kelp Gulls and Subantarctic Skuas were hardly even noticed, but the many Antarctic Fur Seals with their pups did distract us occasionally.

Our final day at South Georgia started off in Cooper Bay where we visited a colony of comical Macaroni Penguins with their gorgeous golden crests as they played hide-and-seek with us in the long tussock grass.



The area also held further attractions in the form of Chinstrap, Gentoo and King Penguins, whilst we were extremely excited to finally catch up with the island's only true endemic, the South Georgia Pipit, which is also the world's most southerly occurring passerine. South Georgia has unfortunately been plagued with the highly destructive Brown Rat that has wreaked havoc upon the native bird populations since their introduction more than a century ago. However, this is one of the relatively few rat-free areas, allowing us to obtain excellent views of this

endemic.

It was also here that we learnt how quickly the weather can turn in these regions, with a rather eventful return from shore to the ship via zodiacs that left many of the passengers absolutely drenched and jumping into a welcome hot shower once back onboard! Our last South Georgia experience was a cruise up the Drygalski Fjord, an absolutely spectacular area with rugged, snow-capped mountains and awesome glaciers – this has to be one of the most scenic places in the world! Add to this our first Snow Petrels of the trip, and it was truly etched into our memories. Sailing out of the fjord, we then passed Cape Disappointment before heading due south and saying our good-byes to this magical place.

The following days at sea saw us reacquainting ourselves with many of the same species we had seen earlier in the trip. It was a good time to work on picking out Blue Petrels, with their white-tipped tails and black hind-crowns and napes, amongst the many Antarctic Prions, while Cape Petrel numbers also increased dramatically. Snow Petrels were now becoming more regular, and the real doyen of the open ocean, the Wandering Albatross, was constantly in attendance around the ship. Careful checking of the cetaceans also revealed several Sei Whales amongst the many Fin Whales that we saw. Our arrival at the South Orkney Islands, another series of snow-covered rugged peaks jutting up out of the ocean, was greeted with high winds that made any envisaged landings there impossible, but cruising around the islands added more Antarctic Terns and gorgeous Light-mantled Albatrosses, as well as our first Antarctic Shags of the trip. We then continued our way further south, starting to encounter some incredible icebergs along the way, and anticipation was now high amongst everyone since we were finally getting close to the white continent itself. We also began encountering some new birds, including Southern Fulmar and the wonderful Antarctic Petrel, whilst Humpback Whales joined in the show as well.

By late afternoon we had reached Petrel Cove and Dundee Island in Antarctica proper, and, after dinner, we were to experience our first zodiac cruise in the land of ice. Adelie Penguins were all around us, while Weddell and Crabeater Seals lazed about on the ice. Our first Antarctic sunset aboard the zodiacs was simply incredible, and it was with real excitement that we awoke the next morning knowing that we would soon be landing at Brown Bluff and actually setting foot on the continent for the first time. Brown Bluff held a large Adelie Penguin colony, and we were able to marvel at what might well be considered the world's most comical penguin species as they went about their daily activities. Highly photogenic Gentoo Penguins were also in evidence here, as were the ever-present Kelp Gulls and Antarctic Terns.

In case we had not had enough of Adelie Penguins, our next landing at Paulet Island was even more impressive with an incredibly huge colony of these lovely birds. In fact, there were so many birds there that it was impossible to land on the beach that we originally wanted to due to insufficient space, and we had to make our way around to the back of the island before we could find an open

stretch of beach to land on!

Over the next few days we made many landings and zodiac cruises, visiting a colony of Gentoo Penguins with attendant South Polar Skuas at Trinity Island, cruising Cierva Cove, where we were at arm's length to one of the Antarctic's most feared predators, the Leopard Seal, and enjoyed the incredible experience of having several Antarctic Minke Whales surfacing extremely close to our zodiacs, another large Gentoo Penguin colony at Cuverville Island, cruising the stunning Neumayer Channel and visiting Port Lockroy, the southernmost point of our journey at 64 deg 49' S.



The experience of visiting this remote part of the world is unrivalled and the scenery is indescribable. As much as one can try to put into words what it is like, there is just no other way to get a proper feel for it than to actually be there. It was thus with heavy hearts that we eventually reached the end of our stay in Antarctica; and as we began our trip back, we were sent off on our way by a pod of Humpback Whales in Dallman Bay that put on quite a performance, breaching around our ship. What a fitting end to our incredible experience!

Our return journey across the formidable Drake Passage, a two-day stretch of open seas with an intimidating reputation of forceful waves and unrelenting winds, had us enjoying many of the same species we had seen in the earlier part of the trip. Stately Wandering and Southern Royal Albatrosses vied for our attention in between good sightings of Soft-plumaged Petrels and Black-bellied Storm Petrels; and, after eventually reaching the mouth of the Beagle Channel; we were welcomed home by a playful pod of Killer Whales and some Peale's Dolphins, whilst a constant stream of King Shags and South American Terns passed our ship. Disembarking at Ushuaia, we could not help but to look back and relive the memories of what could only be described as an once-in-a-lifetime experience!



Birds encountered:

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC (International Ornithological Committee) including all recent updates.

Key to abbreviations:

ENDEMISM

(E): endemic (NE): near-endemic (NE): breeding-endemic (I): introduced

*STATUS**(T): threatened (Nt): near-threatened (Vu): vulnerable***Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae****Fuegian (Flightless) Steamer Duck** *Tachyeres pteneres*

We encountered a few as we were leaving Ushuaia.

Falkland Steamer Duck (E) *Tachyeres brachypterus*

We enjoyed great views of this endemic flightless species all around the Falkland Islands.

Upland Goose *Chloephaga picta*

Numerous birds were seen during our time visiting the Falklands Islands.

Kelp Goose *Chloephaga hybrida*

This attractive waterfowl species was regular along the coastal areas of the Falkland Islands.

Ruddy-headed Goose *Chloephaga rubidiceps*

Several seen in the Falkland Islands.

Crested Duck *Lophonetta specularioides*

This species was regularly encountered along the rocky coast of the Falkland Islands.

Speckled Teal *Anas flavirostris*

We found small numbers on the Falklands.

Yellow-billed Pintail *Anas georgica*We found several birds daily at landing sites across South Georgia of the unique carnivorous nominate subspecies *georgica*.**Penguins Spheniscidae****King Penguin** *Aptenodytes patagonicus*

Certainly one of the greatest wildlife spectacles on earth, we enjoyed many thousands of birds at Salisbury Plains on South Georgia whilst we had regular sightings of smaller groups ashore at several sites around the island and in the coastal waters.

Gentoo Penguin (Nt) *Pygoscelis papua*These were first encountered around the Falkland Islands, but were seen regularly throughout the trip at South Georgia and in Antarctica where we visited several breeding colonies. Two subspecies were seen, the nominate *papua* at our more northerly destinations and then *ellsworthi* further south in the Antarctic.**Adelie Penguin** *Pygoscelis adeliae*

These adorable penguins were encountered daily in Antarctica, sometimes in small numbers hauled up on ice and, at other times, in colonies numbering many thousands.

Chinstrap Penguin *Pygoscelis antarcticus*

First encountered around South Georgia, whilst smaller numbers were also seen in the Antarctic.

Western Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome*

We enjoyed the antics of several thousand delightful birds at a noisy nesting colony in the Falklands.

Macaroni Penguin (Vu) *Eudyptes chrysolophus*

Several hundred birds were seen at sites around South Georgia including a landing at a large colony in Cooper Bay.

Magellanic Penguin (Nt) *Spheniscus magellanicus*

We first encountered this species in the Beagle Channel after leaving Ushuaia and then daily around the Falkland Islands.

Albatrosses Diomedidae**Southern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea epomophora*

This species was first seen en route to the Falklands followed by daily encounters en route to South Georgia with scattered sightings thereafter.

Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi*

Significantly less common in these waters than the preceding species, this bird was only seen en route to the Falkland Islands.

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*

Apart from the actual Antarctic area, we enjoyed daily sightings of this spectacular seabird throughout the trip.

Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*

A single bird seen briefly by some of the participants between the Falklands and South Georgia.

Light-mantled Albatross (Nt) *Phoebastria palpebrata*

We enjoyed daily sightings of several birds each day in the waters surrounding South Georgia and also on the first day of our Drake Passage crossing.

Grey-headed Albatross (Vu) *Thalassarche chrysostoma*

This attractive albatross was not common but we saw them daily in the waters surrounding South Georgia and again in the Drake Passage.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophrys*

By far the most common albatross of our voyage with several hundred recorded on many days of the trip at sea, although undoubtedly our most memorable experience was sitting among hundreds of birds as they nested on the Falkland Islands sometimes cruising only a few feet above our heads – what a sight!

Petrels & Shearwaters Procellariidae

Southern Giant Petrel (Vu) *Macronectes giganteus*

Encountered throughout the trip almost daily with some great views interacting with other species ashore at South Georgia. Several of the white morph were seen as well.

Northern Giant Petrel (Nt) *Macronectes halli*

Not as numerous as the preceding species, but still seen daily throughout most of the trip.

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides*

This attractive seabird was first encountered south of the South Orkneys in reasonable numbers and again in good numbers on the first day of the Drake Passage crossing.

Antarctic Petrel (BE) *Thalassoica antarctica*

Seen in much the same area as the preceding species, we were lucky to have many of these mixed in with a huge group of Cape Petrels on the first day of the Drake Passage crossing.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense*

A constant companion throughout the voyage and seen every day at sea sometimes with hundreds of this attractive species encountered in a single day.

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*

One of those amazing pure white birds that really epitomizes Antarctica; our first encounter with this species was in South Georgia with peak numbers near the Antarctic Peninsula.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*

Singletons were seen by some en-route to South Georgia but seen in good numbers by all on our way to the Antarctic Peninsula.

Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*

The most numerous prions once we crossed over the Antarctic Convergence into the Southern Ocean with peak numbers of up to several thousand birds estimated in a single day.

Slender-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*

Common only at the beginning of our trip while still further north in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands.

Kerguelen Petrel *Aphrodroma brevirostris*

Brief encounters by some early on in the trip, but 2 friendly individuals spent a fair amount of time with the ship south of South Georgia.

Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*

Seen briefly by some en-route to South Georgia.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*

Although not numerous, we encountered several birds between the Falklands and South Georgia and again on the Drake Passage crossing.

White-chinned Petrel (Vu) *Procellaria aequinoctialis*

This widespread species was fairly common at sea throughout the tour with moderate numbers on most days throughout the voyage.

Sooty Shearwater (Nt) *Puffinus griseus*

Most common near the mainland of South America and in the waters surrounding the Falkland Islands where we watched this species daily sometimes numbering well into the hundreds or even thousands.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*

Good numbers were seen en route to the Falklands and again in the Drake Passage.

Storm Petrels Hydrobatidae

Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

We found this widespread species in good numbers almost daily, even having them skimming over the mirror-like waters right in the south.

Grey-backed Storm Petrel *Garrodia nereis*

An attractive, but uncommon species, that we found in small numbers en-route to the Falkland Islands and again in the Drake Passage.

Black-bellied Storm Petrel *Fregetta tropica*

Scattered numbers of this distinctive storm-petrel were enjoyed on several days throughout.

Diving Petrels Pelecanoididae

Magellanic Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides magellani*

Only observed near the mouth of the Beagle Channel en route to the Falklands.

South Georgia Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus*

This is a tough species to separate from the more abundant Common Diving-Petrel, but we were able to identify a few around South Georgia.

Common Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*

Although we saw numbers of Diving Petrels whilst cruising, they were not always identifiable due to distance, but were presumably mostly this species. We did however see definite individuals en route to, around and south of South Georgia.

Hérons Ardeidae

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

We found several of this cosmopolitan species on the Falkland Islands.

Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae

Rock Shag *Leucocarbo magellanicus*

We encountered this species when leaving Ushuaia and again on the Falkland Islands.

South Georgia Shag (E) *Leucocarbo georgianus*

Sometimes hundreds of birds were seen daily while we were close to the shoreline of South Georgia including good views of nesting birds around Cooper Bay.

Antarctic Shag *Leucocarbo bransfieldensis*

We were pleased to see a good number of birds including breeding birds while exploring various areas of the Antarctic Peninsula.

King Shag *Leucocarbo albiventer*

This species was common in the Beagle Channel and was also seen at the Falkland Islands.

New World Vultures Cathartidae

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

We had several very close sightings on the Falkland Islands.

Kites, Hawks and Eagles Accipitridae

Variable Hawk

Buteo polyosoma

A single individual provided close views on the Falkland Islands.

Caracaras & Falcons Falconidae

Striated Caracara (Nt)

Phalacrocorax australis

This fantastic near endemic to the Falklands was seen in good numbers on one day especially at the Westpoint and Carcuss Island landings.

Sheathbills Chionidae

Snowy Sheathbill

Chionis albus

A unique family of the Antarctic, we enjoyed birds walking around our feet while landing on South Georgia and the Antarctic.

Oystercatchers Haematopidae

Magellanic Oystercatcher

Haematopus leucopus

We enjoyed several of these striking birds in the Falkland Islands.

Blackish Oystercatcher

Haematopus ater

Another eye-catching species that we saw only on the Falkland Islands where we had some confiding birds on Westpoint Island.

Plovers Charadriidae

Two-banded Plover

Charadrius modestus

Several individuals of this small striking plover were seen en route to Gypsy Cove in the Falklands.

Sandpipers & Snipes Scolopacidae

South American Snipe (Magellan)

Gallinago paraguaiiae

We had some very co-operative birds on Carcuss Island in the Falklands.

White-rumped Sandpiper

Calidris bairdii

Reasonable numbers of this migrant were encountered en route to Gypsy Cove in the Falklands.

Gulls & Terns Laridae

Dolphin Gull

Leucophaeus scoresbii

We enjoyed large numbers of these striking gulls on the Falkland Islands.

Kelp Gull

Larus dominicanus

Large numbers of this species were encountered at scattered sightings throughout the voyage.

South American Tern

Sterna hirundinacea

This sleek tern was only seen near the mainland and the Falklands Islands.

Arctic Tern

Sterna paradisaea

A long distance migrant that we located in small numbers at a couple of scattered localities.

Antarctic Tern

Sterna vittata

A stunning species that we found to be relatively common in the vicinity of South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula including adults feeding chicks very close to us at Grytviken.

Skuas Stercorariidae

Chilean Skua

Stercorarius chilensis

Several were seen as we made our way through the Beagle Channel.

South Polar Skua

Stercorarius maccormicki

The majority of skuas that we saw in the vicinity of the Antarctic Peninsula were this species.

Subantarctic (Brown) Skua *Stercorarius antarcticus*

We observed this species throughout much of our voyage although numbers were higher in the more northerly parts of the trip. Two subspecies were encountered, the nominate *antarcticus* close to the mainland and in the Falklands and *lonnbergi* around South Georgia and further south.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

One bird was seen in the Beagle Channel shortly after leaving Ushuaia.

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

We encountered this species regularly on the outer islands of the Falklands.

Ovenbirds Furnariidae**Blackish Cinclodes** *Cinclodes antarcticus*

Locally abundant on the Falkland Islands where they literally ran around at our feet on Carcuss Island.

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

A lovely endemic that suffers from the infestation of rats and cats throughout much of the Falklands, we found a predatory-free zone at Carcuss Island where we encountered good numbers of this species.

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

We encountered this species commonly on the Falkland Islands.

Old World Sparrows Passeridae**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

We only found this species in Stanley in the Falkland Islands.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**Correndera Pipit** *Anthus correndera*

We located this species in several areas in the Falklands.

South Georgia Pipit (E) *Anthus antarcticus*

On our final morning in South Georgia, we enjoyed great views of this endemic in Cooper Bay on South Georgia, the world's southernmost passerine.

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

This brightly colored finch was located at several times on the Falklands.

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

This is another colorful species that we observed in good numbers on consecutive days on the Falkland Islands.

Tanagers & Allies Thraupidae**White-bridled (Canary-winged/Black-throated) Finch** *Melanodera melanodera*

This species was first located at Carcuss Island in the Falklands and then seen again at Gypsy Cove by some.

Mammals encountered:**Eared Seals & Sea Lions Otariidae****South American Sea Lion***Otaria flavescens*

We had just a few sightings of this species heading towards the Falklands.

South American Fur Seal*Arctocephalus australis*

Although common on the South American mainland, we encountered just a few animals at sea near the Falkland Islands.

Antarctic Fur Seal*Arctocephalus gazella*

Thousands encountered throughout our voyage especially in the vicinity of South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula where we were sometimes trying to avoid unwanted aggression from territorial bulls.

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

A very impressive beast of which we encountered many animals especially on South Georgia.

Crabeater Seal*Lobodon carcinophagus*

This sleek seal was observed regularly in the pack ice around the Antarctic Peninsula.

Leopard Seal*Hydrurga leptonyx*

Seen regularly in the pack ice areas with some spectacularly close up views at Cierva Cove.

Weddell Seal*Leptonychotes weddellii*

Seen regularly in the pack ice with some great up close and personal views on our zodiac cruises.

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

Certainly one of the highlights of the trip, we encountered several pods of these beautiful creatures during our tour with individuals of both Ecotype A and B seen well.

Peale's Dolphin*Lagenorhynchus australis*

We first located this species en route to the Falklands, around the Falklands and on the trip back in the Drake Passage.

Commerson's Dolphin*Cephalorhynchus commersonii*

A very striking species that we only found near Port Stanley in the Falklands.

Hourglass Dolphin*Lagenorhynchus cruciger*

Another very attractive species that we found in open ocean en route to and south of South Georgia including several playful individuals that constantly leapt out of the water close to the ship.

Rorquals Balaenopteridae**Antarctic Minke Whale***Balaenoptera bonaerensis*

We encountered this species regularly in the pack ice in Antarctica.

Humpback Whale*Megaptera novaeangliae*

We found this species several times close to Antarctica, including several individuals that were breaching close to us as we left Antarctica.

Sei Whale*Balaenoptera borealis*

Not as common as the next species, but we did find this animal on several days.

Fin Whale*Balaenoptera physalus*

This is the second largest whale in the world after the Blue Whale and we had numerous sighting of these magnificent animals on many days of the trip.

Deer Cervidae**Reindeer***Rangifer tarandus*

We saw only a few of this introduced species on South Georgia whilst cruising near the whaling stations.

Photo credits (in order of appearance): King Penguins at Salisbury Plain, South Georgia, Cobb's Wren, Snowy Sheathbill, South Georgia Pipit, Adelie Penguin, Antarctic scenery, Zodiac cruising in Antarctica. All photos by Trevor Hardaker.



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