

# The Falkland Islands

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 - 24 November 2012

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Feeding seabirds by Peter Wilson



Orcas by Alan Henry



White-bellied Finch by Alan Henry



Magellanic and Gentoo Penguins by Alan Henry

Report compiled by Alan Henry  
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Paula Slater  
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## Day 1

Thursday 8th November

### Arrived Falkland Islands

Due to weather in the Falkland Islands the MOD airbridge was delayed on Ascension Island for 8 hours. This gave the group a chance to catch up with Ascension Island Frigatebird, the only endemic bird of Ascension Island. They also saw Common Waxbill, Common Myna & Yellow Canary, all introduced birds. The group landed at Mount Pleasant at 9:15pm and were soon on their way to Stanley, finally arriving at the Malvina House Hotel a little after midnight.

## Day 2

Friday 9th November

### Volunteers Point

I met up with the group after they finished their breakfast and just before we started an excursion to Volunteers Beach. We were handed our packed lunches and at 8am the two drivers arrived, so we split ourselves up into the two 4 x 4 Landover's for the drive, which would start on a tarmac road then onto a gravel road before finishing the last 10 -12 miles from Johnsons Harbour farm to Volunteers over uneven boggy grassland track. We headed out of Stanley and were soon seeing Upland Goose, Long Tailed Meadowlark and Turkey Vulture. As we passed the bottom of Berkeley Sound we saw Falkland Steamer Duck, Brown Hooded Gull, South American Tern and Magellanic Oystercatcher. As the wind was blowing hard and there were heavy squalls of hail & rain passing through we decided not to stop but to press onto Volunteers.

We arrived at Johnsons Harbour Farm where we stopped for a few minutes to stretch our legs and used the facilities that are available. We were soon back on our way and arrived at Volunteers house where the warden lives and carried on down to the portacabin. We were soon seeing our first penguin species of the tour in the form of a Magellanic Penguin, this was soon followed by Gentoo Penguin and finally the majestic King Penguin colony came into view. We parked up at the portacabin come visitors centre where we stored our packed lunches and rucksacks that we did not need and headed towards the main group of King Penguins. In amongst the adult birds there were lots of brown fluffy chicks that had formed into crèches. Around the edge of the colony there were large numbers of very confident Ruddy Headed & Upland Geese feeding.

After spending some time with the King Penguins we went over to have a look at the Gentoo Penguin colony. On the way over we saw Dolphin Gull, Falkland Thrush, Long Tailed Meadowlark and a pair of Two Banded Plovers.

The Gentoo Penguins were mainly sitting on two eggs with no sign of any chicks yet. Once we finished at the Gentoo Penguins we headed for the portacabin for lunch and to warm up with a hot drink. When we got to the portacabin the drivers had the gas heater on so it did not take long for the group to warm up. We had our lunch and then headed for the beach via some pools near another Gentoo Penguin colony. At the pools we had Crested Duck, Falkland Skua, Snowy Sheathbill, Brown Hooded Gull, Magellanic Oystercatcher and a female Upland Goose sitting on a nest. We then headed down to the water's edge to see some returning penguins.

All too soon it was time to return to the portacabin to collect our stuff and start the journey back to Stanley. On the way back to the rovers we had a flock of mixed waders fly in front of us and land by one of the pools. Firstly we saw a single Rufous Chested Dotterel and then a large flock of Two Banded Plovers and White Rumped Sandpipers. We left Volunteers Beach and headed back to Stanley; very near Johnson Harbour the second Landrover had brief but good views of an adult Southern Caracara. As the weather was improving we stopped off at the bottom of Berkeley Sound where we had seen several species in the morning. We soon picked up a couple of Southern Fulmars on the water along with a family of Falkland Steamer Ducks. On the beach we had Crested Duck, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Kelp Gull and South American Tern.

## Day 3

Saturday 10th November

### Stanley to Port Howard

A bright sunny day with very little wind greeted a very early start for myself, Joan, Pete and Ann as we had a 7am check-in at the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS) for the 40 minute flight to Port Howard. When we arrived at Port Howard we were met by Wayne and Sue Lowe, the owners of Port Howard Lodge, our home for the next couple of nights. We quickly sorted out the rooms and went for a drive down to the jetty where the local ferry/coastal delivery vessel was due. We were hoping to see some dolphins but no luck today. We did see a large group of Southern Giant Petrels, a pair of Falkland Steamer Ducks with 6 ducklings and a couple Black Chinned Siskins and a juvenile Black Crowned Night Heron in the many mature conifer trees near the lodge. We then headed back up through the settlement to the gorse edged grass airstrip to meet the second flight and the rest of the group.

The rest of the group soon arrived and we were all reunited, I introduced them to Wayne & Sue before we went down to the lodge to have a hot drink. The plan for the rest of the day was to go for a drive down to Fox Bay East. We collected our packed lunch and made our way to the two vehicles that we were going in. Wayne was driving one and I was going to be driving the other. On the way we had quite a few Turkey Vultures, Rufous Chested Dotterel, Falkland Pipit, White Bridled Finch & Falkland Thrush. The first stop was to be at a small quarry where it is possible to find different types of fossils, this particularly pleased Paula who has a very keen interest in geology. We arrived at the quarry where there were a couple of Falkland Thrushes and a singing and displaying Falkland Pipit. We soon found a couple of fossils for Paula to have a look at.

We left the quarry and headed for our next stop that was to be Hawks Nest ponds a small nature reserve now owned by Falkland Conservation. We arrived at Hawks Nest nature reserve which is two large ponds fringed by Californian Clubrush. We soon saw Speckled Teal, Silver Teal, Crested Duck along with Yellow Billed Pintail, 5 Black Necked Swans & White Tufted Grebe that were all new species for the trip.

After we had eaten lunch we headed around the back of the Californian Clubbrush where we had great views of small flocks of feeding White Bridled Finches & Falkland Pipit, we also saw a Grass Wren fly out of the Californian Clubbrush with food in its beak to a clump of White Grass about 100 yards from the edge of the pond. We watched it for a while go back and forth with food to its chicks. Further along we saw the 5 Black Necked Swans that we had seen earlier.

We left Hawks Nest Nature reserve and headed towards Fox Bay East passing lots of ponds on the way which held plenty of Speckled Teal & Ruddy Headed Goose. We saw another new species for the tour in the form of a Red Backed Hawk just before we got to Little Chartres farm. At Fox Bay East we had great views of Rufous Chested Dotterel and Two-banded Plover. Wayne then showed us a breeding pair of Red Backed Hawks, the male was sitting on the nest while the female kept a lookout from the top of the cliff. Unfortunately the Gentoo Penguin colony that used to be in the area has all but disappeared; today there were just a few birds there. Out at Sea we had Southern Fulmar, Southern Giant Petrel, King Cormorant, Rock Shag and Falkland Skua.

On the way back to Port Howard we passed a couple of small farms including Harps Farm, just after there we stopped off at a small stream where we had two pairs of Chiloe Wigeon with a small flock of Speckled Teal. Back at Port Howard we enjoyed a fabulous meal before going for a short evenings walk to see if we could see any Black Crowned Night Herons feeding in the creek, luckily we found a second year bird that allowed us to view it. We ended the night watching the International Space Station go over.

## Day 4

Sunday 11th November

### Port Howard

A few of us got up early to have a look around the settlement; we had two juvenile Black Crowned Night Herons in the same tree as yesterday morning. At the jetty we saw South American Tern, King Cormorant and Rock Shag. In the creek we had Southern Giant Petrel, Crested Duck and Falkland Steamer Duck. A fly over Southern Caracara was a real bonus as was a Striated Caracara at the top of the "Night Heron" tree that gave us excellent views. Around the lodge we had Long Tailed Meadowlark, Falkland Thrush and Black Chinned Siskin.

We then returned to the lodge to have breakfast and get ready for today's trip. The plan today was to go off road to White Rock to view the mixed Rockhopper Penguin and King Cormorant colonies. We split up into two groups as we were going in two vehicles with Wayne driving one and me the other. Once we set off we were soon seeing White Bridled Finch, Falkland Thrush, Long Tailed Meadowlark and Falkland Pipit by the side of the road. We soon left the main gravel track and headed off across the grassland where we had great close views of several Rufous Chested Dotterel. At one of the gates 3 Dark Faced Ground Tyrants were sitting on the posts and wire, this was the first time some of the group had seen this species well. We also saw a Magellanic Snipe fly up from the track and land some way off, while trying to relocate it I managed to get bogged which my passenger thought was very funny! Thankfully Wayne eventually realised we were missing and came back and pulled me out.

On the way to White Rock we passed a couple of old shepherds houses, one was Rosalie House where we hoped to see Barn Owl, unfortunately there was no sign of the Barn Owl but we did find a couple of very young Turkey Vulture chicks in one of the sheds.

The other old shepherd's house that we passed was White Rock House. Soon after passing it we got to the first mixed Rockhopper Penguin and King Cormorant colony, we parked up and spend the next couple of hours exploring the area. It did not take long to find the pair of Macaroni Penguins in amongst the Rockhopper Penguins, they were right in the middle so it was not possible to get good photographs but the entire group managed to see them well. At the back of the colony I found a Butterfly which turned out to be a vagrant Brazilian Painted Lady a real bonus find for the group. Also seen around the colony were two of the top predators of Rockhopper Penguins - we watched a Falkland Skua attempting to steal eggs from the Rockhoppers, it did eventually managed to drop in amongst the Rockhoppers and steal an egg. The other predator being the Striated Caracara, one bird was very confiding as they normally are and came right up to the group looking for a hand out.

There are a few Southern Sea Lions at the bottom of the cliffs at White Rock so most of the group climbed a little way down to get good views of about 15 animals lying on the rocks. There were a couple of Turkey Vultures, a Snowy Sheathbill and a large group of Dolphin Gulls hanging around the Sothern Sea Lions. Before we left we could see groups of Rockhopper Penguins gathering offshore ready to come ashore, we walked along the cliffs to be above where they were coming ashore and waited for the next group. After a while and a few attempts a big group came ashore below us and we watched as they scrambled and hopped up the rocks.

It was soon time to start the long drive back to Port Howard seeing much the same species as we had seen on the way there. We arrived back at Port Howard in the early evening and had a very pleasant meal and another after meal walk to round the day off.

## Day 5

Monday 12th November

### Port Howard to Pebble Island

Again a few of us got up early to have a look around the settlement before breakfast there was no sign of any Black Crowned Night Herons in the usual tree but Paula and I did find 2 adults and 3 juvenile in a tree just by the lodge. After breakfast we all went down to the jetty in the hope of seeing dolphins. There were several Rock Shags and a single King Cormorant on the jetty with Falkland Steamer Duck and Crested Duck swimming in the harbour a couple of South American Terns were feeding in the shallows when Anne spotted a fin on the far side of the harbour. We all watched as a couple of Commerson's Dolphins made their way over towards us before disappearing. We then made our way back to the lodge to collect our bags before catching the 15 minute flight to Pebble Island.

We arrived at Pebble Island and were met by Jacqui Jennings owner of the lodge that was to be home to the group for the next 3 nights. After we had sorted the rooms we had a quick hot drink before going on a long walk down to Big Pond. On the way we saw lots of Rufous Chested Dotterel, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Ruddy Headed Goose, Upland Goose and Kelp Goose. Before we got to big pond we stopped off at a smaller pond where we saw our first Silvery Grebe of the trip along with White Tufted Grebe, Speckled Teal, Crested Duck, Chiloe Wigeon. We then moved onto Bog Pond where we saw a pair of Two Banded Plovers with very small chicks, here we met Allan White co-owner of Pebble Lodge who was taking another lodge guest out on an excursion to the east end of the island. We had a quick chat and did some introductions before carrying on down to the pond where we saw a very large group of Silvery Grebe and a couple of White Tufted Grebe including an adult with a chick on its back.

Another couple of Rufous Chested Dotterel were seen in amongst the heath land by the pond. A single Black Necked Swan was seen at the end of the pond so we walked towards it to get better views passing a couple of pairs of Flying Steamer Ducks and a Magellanic Oystercatcher with a very large chick on the way. As we were making our way back to the lodge Richard called out as a Peregrine Falcon flew straight over the group giving great views. We also saw a single White Rumped Sandpiper feeding in amongst a group of Two-banded Plovers. The second butterfly of the trip was also seen near the lodge, it was a Southern Painted Lady a scarce migrant to the Falkland Islands. Falkland Thrush, Long Tailed Meadowlark and Black Chinned Siskin were very easy to see around the lodge.

Before dinner we all went down to the jetty where the local supply vessel was going to be docking in the hope of seeing more Commerson's Dolphins. We were soon watching a couple swimming around but quite far offshore so the views were not the best. We did have excellent views of a Southern Giant Petrel skimming along the top of the jetty. On the shore there were a group of Snowy Sheathbills and a single Blackish Oystercatcher. Further along the beach, a couple of juvenile Black Crowned Night Herons and a sub adult male Kelp Goose were feeding.

## Day 6

Tuesday 13th November

### Pebble Island

The weather today was glorious sunshine with clear blue skies and very little wind so it was decided that we would have a full day excursion to the west end of Pebble Island. After we had finished our breakfast we loaded the two vehicles with our rucksacks and packed lunches and set off for the day. Allan was driving one vehicle and I was driving the other, this meant that everyone in the group had a comfortable window seat. We soon had a small flock of Brown Hooded Gulls and a couple of Blackish Oystercatcher feeding on the beach near the lodge. We then found a feeding female Red Backed Hawk on the side of the track that allowed us to get quite close and obtain fantastic views of it feeding on a Long Tailed Meadowlark.

We pressed on to Victory Creek where we hoped to find a colony of breeding South American Terns. We arrived at Victory Creek but there was no sign of the breeding South American Terns just a few fishing in the creek. There were though a few Magellanic Penguins sitting by their burrows and lots of Magellanic Oystercatchers, White Rumped Sandpipers, Blackish Oystercatchers feeding on the beach. Overhead a couple of Typhoon aircraft were leaving vapour trails in the clear blue skies as they headed back in the direction of Mount Pleasant airport.

We carried on and soon came to a crash site of an Argentine Dagger aircraft shot down during the 1982 war. Here Allan gave an excellent and very informative talk on the events surrounding the shooting down of the aircraft. We then moved on to a small memorial to the aircrew of an Argentine Lear Jet shot down by HMS Exeter while it was on a reconnaissance mission over the Falkland Islands, again Allan gave an excellent talk on the circumstances of the shooting down of the jet.

At a place called Green Rincon we watched groups of Gentoo Penguins coming ashore and sunning themselves on the beach. Also at Green Rincon there is a large Southern Giant Petrel colony that we watched from a distance so as not to disturb them.

Just further along the coast I found a dead Southern Giant Petrel, I was showing them the bird's impressive beak and how to tell them apart from the closely related Northern Giant Petrel when we noticed the bird had a metal ring on. I took the metal ring off the bird so I could send away for information about the ringing/banding of the bird. Information that I received back was that it was a male banded on 1st November 2003 at Palmer Station on Anver Island in Antarctica it was banded as an adult bird.

We then moved onto the main Rockhopper Penguin colony near Marble Mountain where we were going to have lunch. We soon found 3 Macaroni Penguins that gave much better views than the birds we had seen at White Rock a few days ago. No sign of any Rockhopper x Macaroni Hybrids that have been seen in this colony in the past. We spent the next couple of hours watching the Rockhopper Penguins coming and going from their colony before moving onto Marble Shanty for a look around.

At Marble Shanty we saw a few Falkland Thrush, Long Tailed Meadowlark, Black Chinned Siskin and White Bridled Finch. On the beach we looked for Falkland Pebbles that gives the island its name, a shout of Dolphin soon had us watching our first Peale's Dolphins of the tour. We then headed back to the lodge stopping at a Gentoo Penguin colony on the way where we saw a very small chick which was probably the first chick to hatch on Pebble this season.

## Day 7

Wednesday 14th November

### Pebble Island

Another glorious sunny day with a slight breeze greeted us today for our full day excursion to the west end of Pebble Island, soon after breakfast we set off again in two vehicles. First stop of the day was at Big Pond where we had close views of a pair of Flying Steamer Ducks feeding along with both White Tufted and Silvery Grebe. As we were driving along the side of the pond a large flock of Speckled Teal swam out from the back with a superb male Cinnamon Teal in amongst them - Cinnamon Teal is a scarce vagrant to the Falklands. Also on the pond there were Silver Teal, Black Necked Swan, Chiloe Wigeon and Crested Duck. We stopped at a few more ponds and saw several more Flying Steamer Duck and a single Yellow Billed Pintail.

We made a brief stop at a Southern Sea Lion colony where we counted 76 animals, a large increase on the year before; out at sea we could see Black Browed Albatross flying past. We then got to the Tamar Rockhopper Penguin colonies where a main target was a Leucistic Rockhopper Penguin that had returned for its 10th breeding season. After a brief look around I soon located the bird that stands out like a sore thumb. Soon after that I found another weird looking spotty Rockhopper Penguin. We then spent the next couple of hours watching the Rockhopper Penguins and quite often it was the Rockhopper Penguins that were watching us!

Other birds seen around the Rockhopper Penguins were King Cormorant, Falkland Skua, Dolphin Gull, Snowy Sheathbill, Dark Faced Ground Tyrant and Long Tailed Meadowlark. On the way back we drove along the 3 mile sandy beach near the lodge where we saw White Rumped Sandpiper, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Brown Hooded Gull, South American Tern Falkland Steamer Duck and a couple of Commersons Dolphin just behind the surf.

## Day 8

Thursday 15th November

### Pebble Island to Carcass Island

Another glorious sunny day greeted us again today; we had breakfast and then went for a walk down to the jetty where we saw both Magellanic and Blackish Oystercatchers, Snowy Sheathbill, Ruddy Headed Goose, Black Crowned Night Heron, Black Chinned Siskin, Long Tailed Meadowlark and Falkland Thrush. We then headed back to the lodge to get our luggage loaded up into the rovers to be taken to the airstrip for the 20 minute flight to Carcass Island. We said our goodbyes and thanked Allan & Jacqui and boarded the Islander aircraft for the flight landing at Carcass Island 20 minutes later. Here we were greeted by Rob the owner of Carcass Island. We had a 15 minute ride back to the main farmhouse that would be home for the next 3 nights. On the way we saw a single Southern Caracara and plenty of Striated Caracara. Once we got to the settlement we sorted out the rooms and had lunch we then went down to the beach to have a look around.

On the beach there was about 40 Striated Caracara hanging around waiting for the cook to throw out the scraps from lunch. As Carcass Island is cat and rat free, it is teeming with small birds and is home to the endemic Cobb's Wren - a real target bird while we were here. After spending time with the Striated Caracara we carried on further around the coast to look for Cobb's Wren soon finding a few feeding in amongst the large boulders on the beach and in amongst the gorse that cover large areas around the settlement.

We also saw Kelp Goose, Falkland Steamer Duck with young, Southern Caracara, Black Crowned Night Heron, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Blackish Oystercatcher, Grass Wren, Long Tailed Meadowlark, Falkland Thrush, White Bridled Finch, Black Chinned Siskin, Dark faced Ground Tyrant and Tussucbird, another new species for the tour. A short walk after a superb evening meal added Magellanic Penguin to the day list.

## Day 9

Friday 16th November

### Carcass Island – West Point Trip

A few of us got up early to have a wander around the settlement and have a look at the beach in front of the house, a big group of Kelp Geese were present including a female with a strange lump on her head. The Falkland Steamer Ducklings were in a huddle on the beach. Quite a few Crested Duck were seen along with Tussucbird, Dark Faced Ground Tyrant, Long Tailed Meadowlark, Falkland Thrush, White Bridled Finch and Black Chinned Siskin.

As the weather was again bright sunshine and clear blue skies we decided that we would do the boat trip over to West Point Island, so at 9am Michael Clarke arrived with his boat "Condor" for the trip over. Not long after leaving Carcass we were joined by up to 9 Commerson's Dolphins for much of the way over. The wind had got up a little which resulted in some of the group taking shelter inside. The rest enjoyed great views of the Dolphins, Black Browed Albatross, South American Tern and King Cormorant. We soon arrived at West Point and headed up to the main house for a hot drink and cake.

After the refreshment break I drove Penny & Richard over to the Devils Nose while the rest walked which took them about 30 minutes. The Devils Nose is a mixed Black Browed Albatross and Rockhopper Penguin colony where we were able to get up close for breathtaking views of the birds.

We spent a couple of hours enjoying the Black Browed Albatross returning to and flying about the colony, sometime just skimming over our heads. We were enjoying it so much we decided that we would have lunch there. Other birds seen in the area were Striated Caracara, Turkey Vulture, Grass Wren and Dark Faced Ground Tyrant. While down on the rocks, a lone Southern Sea Lion was seen. We headed back to the house for another hot drink before boarding the Condor for the trip back to Carcass via a reef where we hoped to see some more species of seabirds.

Not long after leaving West Point I saw a Cape Petrel heading for the boat, everyone had great views of it as it passed close by. Quite a few Southern Fulmar and lots more Black Browed Albatross were seen before it was time to turn and head back in the direction of Carcass. I picked up a Common Diving Petrel sitting on the water but frustratingly it dived rather than taking off so no member of the group saw it. We were then joined by three different Peale's Dolphin pods giving great views of our second dolphin species of the day. It was then with great relief that I found another Common Diving Petrel on the water but this time it took off and flew passed the boat giving everybody great views of this tiny seabird. When we got back to Carcass Island a bonus of a King Penguin on the beach was a great finish to a fantastic day...

## Day 10

Saturday 17th November

### Carcass Island

A pre breakfast walk down to the beach soon revealed that the King Penguin was still there. Further along the beach I found a singing Grass Wren so called Pete and Ann over to have a look, nearby there was a fledgling Cobb's wren calling. The usual gang of 20+ Striated Caracara were hanging about the beach.

After breakfast the plan was to go to the northwest end of Carcass and walk around the coast to see the Southern Elephant Seals. As we would be walking over rough ground Penny decided that she would have an easy day around the settlement. We drove over to the large pond and parked up to begin the walk. Around the pond there were lots of adult Black Crowned Night Herons while on the pond there was a large flock of Speckled Teal, a few Chiloe Wigeon, a pair Silvery Grebe as well as hundreds of all 3 species of geese. As we walked over to the beach we passed Falkland Skuas, Kelp Gulls and Dolphin Gulls. At the beach we passed a Magellanic Oystercatcher nest with two eggs in it and then another pair of Magellanic Oystercatchers with a small chick. We quickly moved on seeing several pairs of White Bridled Finch along with Tussucbird, Cobb's Wren, Long Tailed Meadowlark and Falkland Thrush. We soon came across young Southern Elephant Seal play fighting in the water, and we also had the best views of Magellanic Snipe of the tour so far when a couple of birds were seen on the grass at the back of the beach.

I then saw a pale Giant Petrel flying towards us that I made sure the entire group had good views of it as it passed very close by. It was as I suspected a Northern Giant Petrel, a scarce bird in the Falkland Islands, and a real bonus bird for us to see. An adult Striated Caracara sitting on a washed up tree trunk was also seen, its partner we suspected was sitting on a nest nearby. We continued along the beach until we got right to the northwest point where we had lunch and enjoyed great views of some very large bull Southern Elephants Seals as well as some very small pups. Here we also saw a small group of Southern Sea Lions.

We made our way back to the main pond seeing a few Southern Painted Lady butterflies on the way, we then set off back to the settlement stopping at a small pond where there were at least 4 pairs of Ruddy Headed Geese with young along with 2 pairs of Upland Goose and Speckled Teal that also had young. With so many pairs of birds with young there was a lot of fighting amongst the adult birds. Once we were back at the house we had a great evening meal after which a few went for yet another walk to finish the day.

## Day 11

Sunday 18th November

### Carcass Island to Sea Lion Island

We were all up early again for a last walk along the beach before breakfast seeing much the same birds that we had seen on previous mornings. There was a large group of Striated Caracara feeding on the scraps that the cook had put out and also a very tame bird that feeds from the cook's hand.

We then had breakfast and packed up and got taken to the grass airstrip ready for our 40 minute flight to Sea Lion Island. We arrived at Sea Lion Island and settled into our rooms, the plan was for us to be driven by Jenny the lodge manager to the Rockhopper Penguin colony that is at the other end of the Island. Penny was going to stay with Jenny and the rest of us were going to hike back to the lodge. Jenny took us to the large King Cormorant Colony at the very far end of the island before we got dropped off at the Rockhopper Penguin colony which is where the HMS Sheffield memorial is also situated, we parked up and had a good look at the Rockhopper Penguins which also had quite a few King Cormorants in amongst them over head a Falkland Skua was on the lookout for any unguarded eggs.

Out at sea we saw a few Black Browed Albatross, Southern Fulmar and a couple of Cape Petrels. We then started back toward the lodge, on the way we saw lots of White Bridled Finch including several recently fledged juveniles, Rufous Chested Dotterel, Tussucbird, Grass Wren and Falkland Thrush.

Upland Goose is plentiful all over Sea Lion Island and when we approached Long Pond over 70 birds were feeding on the grass around the edge along with smaller numbers of Ruddy Headed Goose in amongst them. On the pond there were a couple of Silver Teal a few of both Specked Teal and Crested Duck along with several Silvery Grebe that gave very close views. We also found a couple of calling Grass Wrens and a single Magellanic Snipe in the large stand of California Clubrush that is growing along one edge of the pond.

We then spent some time looking for Short Eared Owls but with no luck. We did find a Rufous Chested Dotterel nest and several more Magellanic Snipe & Grass Wren, lots more White Bridled Finch and a few Falkland Pipit. We stopped off at a small peaty pond that had a few Magellanic Penguins swimming around it. We then arrived down at Elephant Point named after the large numbers of Southern Elephant Seals that are in the area. Along the beach there were Dolphin Gull, Kelp Gull, Snowy Sheathbill, Falkland Steamer Duck, offshore we saw South American Tern, Brown Hooded Gull and Southern Giant Petrel. I then briefly saw an Orca far out in the kelp, after a few minutes it reappeared and we all had good but distant views.

We arrived back at the lodge where we had a hot drink and a rest for a while. We then finished the day off by watching the Gentoo Penguins coming ashore on the north beach

## Day 12

Monday 19th November

### Sea Lion Island

We got up very early this morning and headed down to Elephant Point in the hope of seeing Orca's close inshore hunting Southern Elephant Seals. The weather was warm and sunny but there was quite a breeze blowing. After several hours it became apparent that the Orca's were not going to be showing, probably due to the stiff breeze blowing towards the shore. We did see Blackish Oystercatcher, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Brown Hooded Gull, Dolphin Gull, South American Tern and a very friendly Kelp Goose that came up and checked Ann out.

We headed back to the lodge for breakfast and to plan the day. It was decided that we would have an easier day today after the last few days of walking. We set off for the north beach after breakfast towards the hide that had Southern Giant Petrels breeding in front of it. We stopped off to have a good look at the Gentoo Penguin colonies that are just in front of the lodge, there were lots of Gentoo Penguins with chicks. We carried on down towards the north beach passing a small muddy pool that had a couple of Southern Elephant Seal pups playing in it, on the pond there were a pair of Chiloe Wigeon and a few Speckled Teal, Falkland Skuas were all around the various Gentoo colonies. A couple of pairs of two Banded Plovers were feeding on the grass areas along with the ever present Tussucbirds & Striated Caracaras. Down at the beach we watched small groups of Gentoo Penguins gathering offshore before coming ashore along with the odd Magellanic Penguin.

We carried along the beach towards the hide in the large sand dunes, when we got there it soon became apparent that the only thing you could see from the hide was grass as a large dune had formed with sand grass growing on it right in front of the hide much to everyone's amusement! We then headed over to the south beach where we had a few Cape Petrels. We then watched a battle of David and Goliath proportion in the form of a Tussucbird and a large Bull Southern Elephant Seal. The Tussucbird was pecking at a wound on the nose of the Elephant Seal. Further along the beach there was a large raft of about 50 non breeding Falkland Steamer Ducks swimming offshore that suddenly started to "steam" into the beach, I thought that there might be an Orca about but it turned out that the flock had swam into the territory of a pair of breeding birds and the female was chasing them away. She then swam ashore and joined her ducklings and walked them off further along the beach moving in amongst the dozens of sleeping Southern Elephant Seals.

We then headed back to the lodge for lunch. After lunch a few of us went up to the Gulch which is where they land all goods and food coming onto the island from the ship that runs a cargo freight service around the islands. We saw a pair of Peregrine Falcons very near the Gulch and a small group of Southern Seal Lions at the Gulch. On the way back to the lodge we saw a male Flying Steamer Duck on Long Pond along with Speckled Teal and Silvery Grebe. We also had great views of a Magellanic Snipe and an adult male White Bridled Finch.

## Day 13

Tuesday 20th November

### Sea Lion Island

Today we were all up again early to go down to Elephant Point to see if the Orca's were about. On the way down there were lots of Southern Giant Petrels and all three species of Gulls flying around and sitting on the sea, this was a sure sign that the Orcas were around and hunting...

Soon we saw a pod of 3 animals very close to the shore and soon after the large female caught a Southern Elephant Seal pup and took it out to deep water where she was joined by the smaller female and calf. They then spent the next hour and twenty minutes playing with their prey, it was fascinating to watch the large female taking it out to deep water and teaching the younger animals ambush tactics. They were then joined by another 2 Orcas.

We then all headed back to the lodge to have a quick breakfast before returning just in time to see that the large female had caught another Southern Elephant Seal pup and was again playing with it for over half an hour before they disappeared around the coast not to be seen again. As well as the Southern Giant Petrels, Kelp, Dolphin & Brown Hooded Gulls we saw Cape Petrel & South American Tern while watching the hunting Orcas. On the way back to the lodge we had a very confiding Magellanic Snipe that allowed the group to obtain some stunning images of it.

After lunch we went down to the north beach where we were told there was a carcass of a large Southern Elephant Seal that had lots of birds feeding on it. We got down to the beach and soon found the carcass that had plenty of Striated Caracaras, Turkey Vultures, Falkland Skuas, Kelp Gulls and Southern Giant Petrels all feeding on it. As we slowly approached the carcass I could see one Northern Giant Petrel in amongst the feeding birds. There were in fact at least 2 different Northern Giant Petrels feeding in amongst the Southern Giant Petrels We spent some time watching the feeding birds before we went and had a look at a juvenile King Penguin that had been seen on the beach amongst the Gentoo Penguins.

Later in the afternoon we found out that there had been a sighting of an Arctic Skua up by the old airstrip. Jenny allowed me to use one of the lodge landrovers to take the group to have a look but unfortunately there was no sign of the bird, but this did not dampen the spirit of the group after such a fantastic day!

## Day 14

Wednesday 21st November

### Sea Lion Island to Stanley

Today we were due to be on an early flight back to Stanley so after we had breakfast we packed our bags and got ready for the flight. We were then told due to the very strong wind that the flight was delayed but no departure time could be given which meant that we could not venture very far from the lodge. We did add two species in the form of White Chinned Petrel and Wilson Petrel to the trip list but both were very brief sightings by the leader and one member of the group. We finally boarded our flight back to Stanley where the group had personal time to do as they pleased which included some souvenir shopping.

## Day 15

Thursday 22nd November

### Stanley

There was some more free time this morning for the group to do as they pleased before we all met up in the afternoon down by the public jetty to go on our pelagic in the hunt for seabirds. Due to the sea conditions a couple of the group decided that they would not go and use the time to see some more of Stanley. We set out and soon were seeing Black Browed Albatross, Southern Fulmar and Cape Petrels. We came across a very large feeding flock of King Cormorants and South American Terns.

Also present were Gentoo, Magellanic & Rockhopper Penguins. We then headed further out to sea picking up a Common Diving Petrel before we started laying down a slick of chum made of chopped up fish and small pieces of popcorn to attract the seabirds closer to the launch. We soon had Black Browed Albatross and Southern Giant Petrels feeding on the chum at the back of the boat, soon after we had a very close view of Sooty Shearwaters and White Chinned Petrel soon followed by Cape Petrel, Southern Fulmar and then finally the star of the show appeared in the form of Wilsons Petrel. After about 30 minutes of chumming we had a mass of feeding birds behind the launch which included up to 8 White Chinned Petrels and 30+ Wilsons Petrels.

We then headed for the back of Kidney & Cochon Islands where we had better views of Sooty Shearwaters before heading back to Stanley Harbour. The day was finished off by the sighting of a small pod of Peale's Dolphins including a very small calf.

## Day 16

Friday 23rd November

### Stanley - Brize Norton

The group were picked up early today for their transfer to Mount Pleasant airport for the flight back to the UK.

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Rufous-chested Dotterel by Alan Henry



Leucistic Rockhopper Penguin by Alan Henry

## Species List

### Birds

1	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>
2	Gentoo Penguin	<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>
3	Southern Rockhopper Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>
4	Macaroni Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>
5	Magellanic Penguin	<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>
6	White-tufted Grebe	<i>Rollandia rolland</i>
7	Silvery Grebe	<i>Podiceps occipitalis</i>
8	Black-browed Albatross	<i>Diomedea melanophris</i>
9	Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>
10	Northern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>
11	Southern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
12	Cape Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>
13	White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>
14	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>
15	Wilson's Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>
16	Common Diving Petrel	<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>
17	Rock Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>
18	King Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax atriceps albiventer</i>
19	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax falklandicus</i>
20	Black-necked Swan	<i>Cygnus melancoryphus</i>
21	Ruddy-headed Goose	<i>Chloephaga rubidiceps</i>
22	Upland Goose	<i>Chloephaga picta leucoptera</i>
23	Kelp Goose	<i>Chloephaga hybrida malvinarum</i>
24	Crested Duck	<i>Anas specularoides</i>
25	Falkland Steamer Duck	<i>Tachyeres brachydactyla</i>
26	Flying Steamer Duck	<i>Tachyeres patachonicus</i>
27	Speckled Teal	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>
28	Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>
29	Chiloe Wigeon	<i>Anas sibilatrix</i>
30	Yellow-billed Pintail	<i>Anas georgica spinicauda</i>
31	Silver Teal	<i>Anas versicolor fretensis</i>
32	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura falklandicus</i>
33	Variable (Red-backed) Hawk	<i>Buteo polyosoma</i>
34	Striated Caracara	<i>Phalco boenus australis</i>
35	Southern Caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>
36	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrines cassini</i>
37	Blackish Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ater</i>
38	Magellanic Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus leucopodus</i>
39	Two-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius falklandicus</i>
40	Rufous-chested Dotterel	<i>Charadrius</i>
41	Magellanic Snipe	<i>Gallinago magellanica</i>
42	White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>

43	Snowy Sheathbill	<i>Chionis alba</i>
44	Falkland Skua	<i>Catharacta Antarctica</i>
45	Dolphin Gull	<i>Larus scoresbii</i>
46	Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
47	Brown-hooded Gull	<i>Larus maculipennis</i>
48	South American Tern	<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>
49	Tussacbird	<i>Cinclodes antarcticus</i>
50	Dark-faced Ground-tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola macloviana</i>
51	Falkland Pipit	<i>Anthus correndera grayi</i>
52	Grass Wren	<i>Cistothorus platensis falklandicus</i>
53	Cobb's Wren	<i>Troglodytes cobbi</i>
54	Falkland Thrush	<i>Turdus falcklandii</i>
55	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
56	Black-chinned Siskin	<i>Carduelis barbata</i>
57	White-bridled Finch	<i>Melanodera melanodera</i>
58	Long-tailed Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella loyca falklandica</i>

### Mammals

1	Orca	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
2	Peale's Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus australis</i>
3	Commerson's Dolphin	<i>Cephalorhynchus commersoni</i>
4	Southern Sea Lion	<i>Otaria flavescens</i>
5	Southern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga leonina</i>

### Butterflies

1	Brazilian Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa braziliensis</i>
2	Southern Painted Lady	<i>Cynthia carye</i>
3	Queen of Falklands Fritillary	<i>Issoria cytheris</i>