

# The Falkland Islands

Naturetrek Tour Report

1 - 18 November 2017

---



Silvery Grebe by Cliff Waller



Mourning Sierra Finch by Peter Stott



Imperial Shag by Peter Stott



Magellanic Penguin by Cliff Waller

Report compiled by Cliff Waller  
Images courtesy of Peter Stott & Cliff Waller

---



Naturetrek    Mingledown Barn    Wolf's Lane    Chawton    Alton    Hampshire    GU34 3HJ    UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour participants: Cliff Waller (Leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

Wednesday 1st November

### Brize Norton

The holiday for me started on the M40 with Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard and 17 Red Kites, one of which was sat right alongside of the road.

Due to RAF regulations everyone arrived at Brize Norton in exceptional good time, making the check in quick and easy, although there was then a very long wait for our 1am scheduled flight.

## Day 2

Thursday 2nd November

### West Falkland via Cape Verde

Our flight this year was via Cape Verde, instead of the usual Ascension Island route, as the runway there is under reconstruction. The RAF Air Tanker flight had a mixture of RAF and civilian personnel; the seating was basic, but with exceptionally good leg room, far superior to the usual commercial economy seating. Our flight was a little late getting away, apparently caused by light fog, but we had made up the time by the time we reached our hour-or-so refuelling stop at Cape Verde. This allowed us a good leg stretch, but only within the confines of the airport, although we did manage to see a few birds, such as House Sparrow and the endemic Iago Sparrow (*Passer iagoensis*) and the race of Kestrel called Alexander's Kestrel (*Falco tinnuculus alexandri*).

On the longer second leg to Mount Pleasant, on West Falkland, we managed varying degrees of sleep, although at least everyone got a little. On reaching Mount Pleasant our first new species was Upland Goose, while the formalities of retrieving luggage and form filling were slow, but not arduous and once outside we were soon gathered up by our hosts from Darwin into the minibus. As we travelled we saw birds such as Rufous-chested Plover (also known as Rufous-breasted Dotterel), Long-tailed Meadowlark, Austral (also known as Falkland) Thrush and House Sparrow.

With limited light still available, at our request we passed Darwin to make a short visit to Goose Green, the site of the first major battle during the Falklands War. Here, particularly around a small island, we saw Kelp Gull, Southern Giant Petrel, Falkland Steamer Duck and Brown Skua. (Brown Skua is also known as Antarctic Skua, and sometimes split into three species, of which one is Falkland Skua.) More surprisingly we found two Southern Lapwings, a species which might be attempting to establish here. Up on the hill we could see the cross commemorating the battle of May 1982.

As we neared our comfortable accommodation at Darwin we saw numerous European Hares, a species which seems common where it occurs, but is extremely local. We also stopped to view an Upland Goose on its nest.

## Day 3

Friday 3rd November

### Darwin to Carcass Island

A number of species were seen around the lodge both before and after breakfast, including our first Crested Duck, Variable (also known as Red-backed) Hawk, Blackish Oystercatcher, Black-throated Finch and both Imperial and Rock Shags (the former are sometimes known as King or Imperial Cormorants).

While waiting on the air strip at Goose Green for the two Islanders for our first flight, we found a Two-banded Plover on a nest with three eggs, which was situated on the rather dangerous turning point for the planes. Our flight to Carcass Island was interesting and enjoyable, and some Elephant Seals were visible along the shoreline as we landed. We were greeted by our genial host Rob and we soon headed off along the length of the island to the farmstead, arriving just in time for smoko, the traditional island's coffee break. On our journey we saw several new species of bird, including lots of Blackish Cinclodes (also known as Tussac-bird or Tussock-bird) and a few Dark-faced Ground Tyrants, as well as both Streaked and Southern Crested Caracaras. The large number of small passerines here is symptomatic of the lack of ground predators such as rats.

Due to having only limited time before lunch, we went for a very short walk along the shore, near the homestead, finding a few new birds such as Cobb's Wren, Magellanic Oystercatcher and Kelp Goose, a species which shows incredible sexual dimorphism, with both sexes having extremely beautiful plumage. A few plants were also found, including Sea Cabbage.

After lunch we took the vehicles to drive out to Leopard Beach, where we found our first Penguins, a breeding colony of Gentoo, as well as a number of the burrowing Magellanic. We spent some time here observing both species, including birds coming surfing on to the beach out of the sea and up the beach. Other new species here included a number of Yellow-billed Teal on the pools and several Snowy Sheathbills, which were stalking around the penguin colony looking for opportunities to steal any uncovered eggs.

Normally we walk back to the farm from here, but the wind had increased and it was very cold, so no one fancied the experience, although Peter decided to brave the elements and got out half way back. Later in the afternoon three Chilean Swallows were seen flying around gardens, these being rare migrants from the South American mainland.

## Day 4

Saturday 4th November

### Carcass Island and West Point

A few birds were seen in and around the garden early in the morning, including Striated Caracara, Blackish Cinclodes, Cobb's Wren and Black-chinned Siskin.

We made a late start for West Point due to the supply boat coming in and needing unloading, eventually getting away around 10.15am. The crossing was incredibly quiet for seabirds, with the sea reasonably calm and a little foggy. With the new boat being less capable of going around the more exposed side of West Point Island with its stacks and the highest sea cliffs in the Falklands, we were limited to seeing only a small number of Black-browed Albatross, as well as Imperial and Rock Shags, making the journey generally much poorer for seabirds than usual,

On our arrival we were greeted by Alan, our former host in previous years at Pebble Island, and were soon taken off from the quay near the Homestead in two old Land Rovers to the albatross colony, where on arrival, the cold wind soon had us heading down the more sheltered slope to visit the birds.

The colony is situated on the cliff side in an area of Tussac-grass, which the birds strip down to the basic tufts to nest on; some of these are still quite high, somewhat reminiscent of Flamingo nests. The nest site is shared with Rockhopper Penguins and both species are incredibly confiding, enabling us to get extremely close views of both species without causing any disturbance. With the nests on giant tussocks, many of the birds are at eye level, offering superb photographic opportunities, as well as being able to watch the natural interaction between the birds. It is also exciting to watch the albatrosses flying against the wind coming in to land, often at head height.

Other species seen here, included some very confiding Striated Caracara, Turkey Vulture and Black-faced Ground Tyrant, while around the parking area were lots of mounds of the fascinating Balsam-bog, looking like large green boulders, as well as the dainty Skottsberg's Buttercup.

Once back on board the boat, we again journeyed back along the sheltered leeward side of the island, which enabled us to watch various groups of Gentoo and Magellanic Penguins porpoising their way back up the sound. Also, on the crossing, we ventured close to a rock stack covered with Imperial Shags; we also saw our first Sea Lions here, as well as South American Terns.

## Day 5

Sunday 5th November

### Carcass Island

Quite a few less common species were seen around the homestead before and after breakfast, including Striated Caracara, Cobb's Wren, Austral Thrush, Blackish Cinclodes, as well as Long-tailed Meadowlark, Black-chinned Siskin and Black-throated Finch.

Our excursion on this day was up to the north-west point of the island near the air strip to look for Elephant Seals. Leaving at around 9.45am, we took both vehicles to the end of the air field, where after a short walk through the dunes to a sandy beach, we found several large beachmaster bull Elephant Seals, as well as cows with suckling calves laying both in the dunes and on the beach.

There was an abundance of birds both along the shore and around the pools, including our first White-rumped Sandpiper and South American (also called Magellanic) Snipe, while Brown-headed Gull was new for many of the group. There were also large numbers of Crested Duck as well as Ruddy-headed Geese, Snowy Sheathbill, Striated Caracara and Black-throated Finch, while a new plant here was Arrow-leaved Marigold. We also spent some time studying the skeleton carcass of a Southern Right Whale.

Journeying back, we visited some of the other main pools seeing good numbers of many of the species seen earlier, as well as lots more Yellow-billed Teal, Kelp Gull and Dolphin Gull; there were also over 50+ South American Terns feeding offshore. Another new plant on the way back was Pale Maiden, whilst another South American Snipe was found.

After tea, most of us spent time around the settlement photographing a number of species which are more approachable here, such as Kelp and Ruddy-headed Geese. I also unsuccessfully walked up the hill to look for Lady's Slipper, which looks like an orchid but is actually a *Calceolaria*, a member of the Scrophulariaceae (Figwort) family.

## Day 6

Monday 6th November

### Carcass Island to Pebble Island

A few things were seen around the lodge before we departed, including a Striated Caracara, Blackish Cinclodes and Black-chinned Siskin.

We left Carcass with its abundance of small birds. Even around the airstrip there were numerous Blackish Cinclodes and Austral Thrushes, as well as Long-tailed Meadowlark and Black-faced Ground Tyrant. On take-off, Elephant Seals were apparent on the beach where we had watched them yesterday. Travelling in a single plane, the first group left at 9.45am, flying directly to Pebble; it returned about an hour later for the remainder of us, with our arrival just giving us time to settle in before lunch.

Leaving around 1.30pm we headed east in the vehicles to the wetland area, as Pebble Island is blessed with an abundance of water, including several large water bodies. We found at our first stop, 'Big Pool,' that the water levels were extremely high due to all the recent rain; in fact, so high that the usual access track was part of the pool, providing an interesting drive, as we were a little unsure of the depth, which was somewhat challenging in a few places. Several new bird species were found, including Black-necked Swan, Yellow-billed Pintail, Chiloe Wigeon and both White-tufted and Silvery Grebes, some of which we were able to photograph.

Some of the smaller pools held large numbers of Yellow-billed Teal, some with various sized ducklings present. Several Silvery Teal were also seen, which were new for some of the group who missed them earlier, while the only new plant was Buttonweed.

We crossed the dunes and drove back along Elephant Beach, although Elephant Seal no longer occur here. This is the largest beach in the Falklands and sometimes used as an emergency airstrip. We saw little new here, but there were Kelp Gulls, South American Terns and a small flock of Brown-headed Gulls, new for those of the group who missed them earlier. There were also a few Giant Petrel and Falkland Steamer Duck offshore.

A few of the group dropped off to walk a short distance back to the lodge, arriving just in time for tea. The noticeable difference here, compared to rat-free Carcass Island, is the dearth of small birds.

## Day 7

Tuesday 7th November

### Pebble Island

We headed off to the western end of the island to spend most of the day visiting the various penguin colonies.

First crossing the airfield, where the most successful SAS raid was carried out, which destroyed 11 Argentinian planes, including six Pucara ground-attack aircraft and some T-34 Meteor reconnaissance planes, which could

have compromised our impending landing in East Falkland. The raid was accompanied by a distracting bombardment from the frigate HMS *Broadsword* and the County-class destroyer HMS *Glamorgan*, this shellfire being co-ordinated from the shore by Chris Brown, Royal Artillery 148 Battery 29 Commando.

We saw a number of species as we travelled, including several of the attractive Rufous-breasted Plover (Dotterel), many of them with small chicks. Other species included several Magellan Snipe and Correndera (also known as Falkland) Pipit, while three White-rumped Sandpiper were seen close by on an area of short grass amongst the Diddle-dee, but the highlight was a Patagonian Mockingbird sitting up on a large rock, this being a South American vagrant to the Falklands

A very tame Striated Caracara followed us for quite a distance, until we stopped at No Name Bay for smoko, where two noisy Turkey Vultures allowed a close approach for photographs. We then visited a Gentoo Penguin colony near the famous Pebble Beach, where a few attractive and interesting pebbles were found. We then moved on to the lovely Rockhopper colony where we spent some time watching these enchanting little birds perform, some individuals walking right up to members of the group, even having a peck at their boots. There were also five Macaroni Penguins here and we also found an interesting hybrid bird. Lots of the birds had only recently laid, with lots still to do so.

The drive back was quite difficult in places, with soft ground due to all the recent spring rain, particularly on the peaty areas. We detoured slightly to visit a Giant Petrel breeding colony, which we scoped from a distance, not getting too close, as this species is notorious for being unpredictable and easily disturbed.

We also stopped at the memorial for the crew of the Argentinian Learjet, which was shot down here at 40,000 ft by a Sea Dart missile from HMS *Exeter*, with the loss of five crew, including Argentine's highest-ranking officer to be killed in the war, Wing Commander de la Colina. Our final stop was a hairy drive in the muddy conditions up the steep hill near First Mountain to visit the memorial to the 20 sailors who lost their lives on HMS *Coventry*, which sank just 20 miles offshore from here.

## Day 8

Wednesday 8th November

### Pebble Island

Our excursion on this day was to the east end of the island and with the tide being in, covering the beach, we drove along the side of 'Big Pool,' a place where on my last visit we found a new species for the Falklands, two Neotropic Cormorants, but it was still good with Black-necked Swan, 11 White-tufted Grebe, 12 Silvery Grebe plus some Yellow-billed Pintail and Silver Teal.

Passing various other ponds, including Quark, Bett's, Swan, Green and Beck's Ponds, we saw large numbers of Yellow-billed Teal and 10 Chiloë Wigeon; we also encountered a flock of White-rumped Sandpiper with two Two-banded Plovers. On reaching the Cape Tamar via Cape Evans, we stopped for smoko in spite of a fairly strong wind. A few Sea Lions were present on the rocks below us here, including a couple of fine males.

Moving on, we visited the first of several penguin colonies. The first a small Rockhopper site, with a few Imperial Shags. Later we visited a larger Rockhopper colony, with a large number of nesting Imperial Shags, as

well as two very close Macaroni Penguins, the most photographable we have ever found. The main egg predators here are Brown Skuas, Snowy Sheathbills and Dolphin Gulls, with the skuas being particularly adept at it.

Later we visited a couple more, large Gentoo colonies and spent some time seeing them come and go. This species frequently nests long distances from the sea, often nesting in areas of Diddle-dee, which they strip off for nest making, denuding large areas and creating bare ground.

With the tide being out on the way back, we again drove along Elephant Beach, seeing little new. However, as we crossed back over dunes by the small pond we found 15 Crested Caracara around a small carcass.

With the cold late spring creating an unusually sparse flora, we were still able to find a few new species, including Falkland Thrift and Fachine.

## Day 9

Thursday 9th November

### Pebble Island

Unfortunately, we awoke to rain and very heavy mist, so both of our flights were at least delayed. We sat about in the lodge lounge most of the morning hoping for the weather to lift, which it did briefly on several occasions only to quickly roll back in again.

A few species were seen around the lodge during the morning, mainly through the lounge window, including Turkey Vulture, Striated Caracara, Long-tailed Meadowlark, Austral Thrush and Black-chinned Siskin.

After lunch, at about 2pm we were told that there would not be any flights today, so just a few of us ventured out for a short drive, first going around the settlement where we saw Night Heron and Crested Duck,

Heading up to 'Big Pond', which we visited both while travelling out and back, we saw good numbers of White-tufted and Silvery Grebes and Yellow-billed Pintail, as well as Flying Steamer Ducks. There was also a large number of Kelp Gulls, grounded by the weather, as well as a couple of Dolphin Gulls.

We also saw a number of Two-banded Plover and White-rumped Sandpiper, one of which later provided us with excellent photographic opportunities, as did our first close Yellow-billed Pintail.

Later, we drove along the beach and back, seeing little new, although a number of Two-banded Plover and White-rumped Sandpiper were present and other species encountered included Ruddy-headed Goose, Crested Caracara and another vagrant Barn Swallow.

## Day 10

Friday 10th November

### Pebble Island to Sea Lion Island

In spite of still rather poor weather conditions, we surprisingly managed to get away on our scheduled 8.15am flight, with half the group going directly to Sea Lion Island, while the rest of us travelled via Hill Cove and then back to Carcass Island, seeing Rob again, before heading south to Sea Lion.

A few birds were seen on Pebble before our departure, including Striated Caracara, Two-banded Plover, Long-tailed Meadowlark and our only Black-chinned Siskin of the day.

Due to having lost a day on Sea Lion, after a quick settling in we headed out to Elephant Seal Beach, where a good number of these animals were present, including a very large bull with a good-sized harem. There were also a number of Gentoo colonies, some of which were quite close to the lodge. The beach also held a good number of birds of prey, with lots of Turkey Vulture and Striated Caracara, while Kelp and Dolphin Gulls were present in good numbers, as were Giant Petrel.

A longish search for Orca eventually came up with a fine, but distant, male which quickly moved closer to us through the channel and was found to be accompanied by a female, before they both headed out to sea again.

We took a somewhat circular route back to take in some of the pools, which held good numbers of Two-banded Plover and White-rumped Sandpiper. As we got nearer to the lodge we passed through an area of Tussac-grass and here we saw several Grass Wren, our first as well as another vagrant Barn Swallow.

Due to our failure to get to the island yesterday, to save time and to enable us to visit the west end of the island, we collected packed lunches and borrowed the old long-based Land Rover, into which we managed to cram all the group.

Having been warned of the difficult driving condition with some tracks and routes being impassable due to the very wet conditions, we headed off to the west end of the island, first stopping at Long Pond, where we lunched, watching Chiloë Wigeon, Flying Steamer Duck, Silver Teal, Yellow-billed Teal and Silvery Grebe; there was also a fringe of Cinnamon Grass here in places.

We then drove along the difficult track over Bull Hill towards Rockhopper Point and the HMS *Sheffield* Memorial, where we unfortunately hit an area of very waterlogged ground, which we had no choice but to accelerate through, creating some discomfort and those travelling in the back. After this, we were able to cut across the heath and join a better, but still very wet access track. The Memorial commemorates the 20 killed and 26 wounded, after the *Sheffield* was hit by an Exocet missile; unfortunately, this incident was created mainly through inexperience and negligence, although the proposed court martials were shelved, because of morale. We then moved a short distance to a nearby Rockhopper and Imperial Shag colony, where we found another Macaroni Penguin was present.

As we travelled back we saw numerous South American (Magellanic) Snipe and more Grass Wrens, a species which seemed much commoner than usual. We also made a short detour to East Loafers to look for Sea Lions, but found only one on the rocks down below.

Peter and Carolyn got out, walking back for the second half of the journey, while those of us in the vehicle were close to getting stuck crossing a particularly soft deep area. Peter, on his return, walked out to Elephant Beach finding another pod of five Orca of which he was able to obtain some good photos.

Other new plants found during the day included Yellow Violet, Scurvy-grass and Pineappleweed.

## Day 11

Saturday 11th November

### Sea Lion Island to Stanley

Those of us awake between 4 and 4.30am found the island covered with dense fog, but by the time most of the group appeared, it was completely clear. The Orcas were seen from the lodge before breakfast. Afterwards, we walked out to the beach we had seen them off earlier, but they could not be found, so we spent some time watching the Elephant Seals, particularly the large amorous bull, who was trying his best to coax some of the cows into mating. However, in spite of putting his flipper around them and doing his best to cuddle them, they made it obvious they were not interested, as the cows will not mate until after they have finished their 23-day period of suckling the calves, by which time the calves have increased their weight from 10 to 70 kilos.

We then crossed over to the north side of the island, cutting inland slightly to check the pools. Birds here included 20 White-rumped Sandpiper, South American Tern, Blackish Cinclodes, Black-chinned Siskin and lots of Two-banded Plover, many with chicks of varying ages. Lots of the adults were wearing colour-ring combinations on their legs as part of a local study. Later, the pod of five Orca were found in the other bay, quite close in, which gave the group time to watch and photograph them at close quarters.

Our lunchtime flights were slightly delayed, but we still got to Stanley by mid-afternoon, in time for people to settle in at the comfortable Malvina House Hotel, before making visits to the museum, Cathedral and other places. Several common bird species were seen along the shore, while a large flock of House Sparrows were the first we'd seen for several days.

New plants were also found, including several grasses such as Annual Meadow-grass and Cock's-foot.

## Day 12

Sunday 12th November

### Stanley to Port Howard and Fox Bay

We had to have a very early breakfast, as we needed to leave the hotel by 6.45am to catch an early-morning flight to Port Howard.

On arrival at Port Howard and being met by Wayne and Sue, our excellent hosts for our stay here, we soon headed to the lodge for hot drinks and cakes. Having arrived so early, it was decided that we would make the long drive to Fox Bay, but first we detoured round to Bold Cove and Many Branch Farm to watch the sheep-shearing as it was due to finish that day. Here we spent some time watching not only the shearing but also the sorting and grading of the fleeces.

Heading back to follow the main road towards Fox Bay, we made only a few stops, the first to view the wreckage of an Argentinian multi-role fighter aircraft, an Israeli-built Dagger still with Israeli markings on it, which was shot down by a Sea Dart missile from a Sea Harrier. Wayne told us that the pilot bailed out but did sustain some injuries and that he had recently returned to the island to view his crashed aircraft. Our next stop was at a roadside site where fossils are found in material extracted for road maintenance; several interesting finds were made, and everyone found at least a few fossils of interest.

Continuing to our next stop at Hawk's Nest Pond, we found that we could not get to our usual more sheltered lunch stop, as the area had been fenced off. So, we sat in the vehicles in the small car park to eat our lunch; surprisingly, with the exceptionally strong wind and intermittent drizzle, we were able to sit and enjoy a Grass Wren in full song as it clung to the various grass stems, which were waving about in the wind.

Due to the weather conditions, not everyone wanted to walk the short distance down to the pond, but those others who did were rewarded by seeing ten Black-necked Swans, Chiloë Wigeon, Night Heron, Yellow-billed Pintail and Flying Steamer Duck, amongst other species, while new plants included Teaberry and Vanilla Daisy.

Travelling on to Fox Bay, through the village and heading out to the cliff point, we passed the Gentoo colony, so that we could photograph them coming out of the sea. The highlight here, though, was two Peale's Dolphin, which appeared close inshore, but only a few managed to see them before they disappeared. A pair of Red backed Hawks were nesting on the cliff here, while below them a pair of Black-faced Ground Tyrant were building a nest. Other species seen included Snowy Sheathbill, Dolphin Gull and both Rock and Imperial Shags,

Returning towards the village we stopped to photograph the signs for the mine fields and several obliging Two-banded Plovers. On reaching the village a toilet stop was required at quite an intriguing toilet: what appears as a small tin shed, into which various members of the group kept disappearing and not reappearing, actually opens out into a huge old shearing shed with quite reasonable facilities. Once through the village we stopped near the small churchyard, which is now cut off by an Argentinian minefield, denying locals access to their relatives' graves.

It was a long journey back after our early start this morning and most of the group struggled to stay awake, but we did see a few birds as we travelled including Crested Caracara, Turkey Vulture, Rufus-chested Plover, Two-banded Plover and Correndera (Falkland) Pipit.

Once back at Port Howard, which was occupied by the Argentinians, Wayne opened up his museum for us to view the numerous exhibits he has collected from the war, much of it left behind by the Argentinians, including a couple of field guns.

## Day 13

Monday 13th November

### Port Howard and White Rock

After breakfast all the group walked to the quay, to watch the loading of the island's cargo boat, with much of the cargo being lorry-loads of wool. A couple of Commerson's Dolphins were seen briefly in the sound, while new plants included Spearmint, Water-milfoil and Antarctic Hawkweed.

After returning to the lodge to collect packed lunches etc, we headed off for a three-hour-or-so drive over open country, comprising of moorland, bog, hills and stone runs, to White Rocks; with all the recent rain this was not easy. We soon stopped to photograph a very close Red-backed Hawk. We stopped at the first of the two shepherd's houses, where we got views of a partly hidden Barn Owl in one of the sheds. The house which we entered is used mainly during the sheep roundups, and although quite spartan, the group found it extremely interesting.

Continuing, we reached a new track, where the stone had been ground down across a long stone run. It seemed an incredibly long drive until we reached the second shepherd's house, which had recently been renovated. Here, as we stopped to open the gate, an unusual bird was flushed. As we were stopping here to lunch, I went back the short distance to search for the bird, which proved to be a Morning Sierra Finch, a male in fresh plumage, yet another rare vagrant to the Falkland Islands. Although quite secretive at times, disappearing into the stone walls, some of the group managed to get some excellent photographs of it.

After food and drinks, we set off making the final thrust to reach the Rockhopper and Imperial Shag colony at White Rock cliffs. It proved to be the most delightful colony we'd visited, being on the edge of the cliff with a backdrop of the ocean below. It was a really charming spot, and there were also yet another pair of Macaroni Penguin nesting in the colony while, offshore, numerous Black-browed Albatross were feeding.

We covered the journey back in slightly less time, two and a half hours, arriving back at Port Howard around 5.15pm. It had been another long day, especially the driving in rather bumpy conditions. Wayne also informed us that it was unusual for people to get there and back without getting stuck, especially as the conditions were worse than usual, so we felt pleased.

## Day 14

Tuesday 14th November

### Port Howard to Stanley

We awoke to heavy rain and mist on our final morning at Port Howard, but we were fortunate enough to still get an early morning flight back to Stanley, although a flock of Magellanic Oystercatcher had to be flushed off the landing strip for the plane to land. Most of the group found the flight quite an experience as, due to the weather, the plane flew low over the ground and hills. On our arrival in Stanley we transferred to the Malvina Hotel, only to be told that our intended pelagic trip had been cancelled due to the poor weather; disappointing but giving us some free time.

After lunch the group filled in the afternoon with a variety of options: the museum, the cathedral, the war memorials and visits to a private house, which has an array of various whale skeletons, as well as the post office for wildlife stamps and shopping in town.

A few birds were seen along the waterfront, including good numbers of Giant Petrel, as well as both Imperial and Rock Shags and a couple of Dolphin Gulls. New plants included the very attractive Orange Hawkweed near the hotel.

## Day 15

Wednesday 15th November

### Stanley and Cape Dolphin

This morning we met up with our two rather characterful driver/guides, Sandy and Nobby, who provided us with an interesting and informative journey. We set off at 8am on the long journey to Cape Dolphin, the most Northerly point of East Falkland, 60 miles by main roads, mainly un-metalled and then a further 10 miles across the bog land.

We made our first stop at Cape Dolphin Farm to take advantage of the facilities, but it was a pleasure to meet up with the tenant Sonia and her son, playing with the dogs, including a puppy, while queuing for the bathroom. The group also spent time admiring the extremely well-kept garden.

We drove on through various gates until just before the point, where a distant whale species was seen; unfortunately, it could not be re-found when we stopped. On reaching the point where the Tussac-grass started we were greeted by four bull Sea Lions, two of which were really fine specimens. Moving to the cliff edge, we were able to observe several more Sea Lions in the Tussac-grass, while a close-by rock stack held eight Turkey Vultures. A little time spent sea watching at this lovely spot. It is ideal for sea watching, especially if there is an onshore wind; what little wind present was offshore, but we still saw quite a few Black-browed Albatross and Sooty Shearwaters, as well as a number of Southern Fulmar and an odd Slender-billed Prion.

Way offshore, as a marker a point for the sea watching, was Eddystone Rock, a known haunt of Fur Seals, but far too distant to observe any, even if there were any present (they generally tend to arrive a little later).

On the way back, we drove around the main pool here, Swan Pond, seeing Chiloë Wigeon, Crested Duck, as well as six more Black-necked Swans. Several hundred Yellow-billed Teal were also present, more than I'd seen anywhere previously on the islands. They were more abundant everywhere compared to previous visits. Other species seen on the journey back included Red-backed Hawk, Rufus-breasted Plover (Dotterel) and Correndera (Falkland) Pipit.

After reaching the made road we made a couple of photographic stops, one for two helicopters that had been shot down and then for the famous shoe display known as Boot Hill, an array of footwear on posts and sticks. There are a number of theories as to its origins: one that it was started by Airport employees on their departure or that more bizarrely that after the Falkland War, part of a leg was found here with a boot on and more boots were added as a sign of sympathy. The most likely however is that visitors and islanders follow the old superstition that if you leave left a piece of foot wear behind it's a sign that they will one day return. We arrived back in Stanley at 4.45pm.

## Day 16

Thursday 16th November

### Stanley and Volunteer Point

On our final full day we headed out earlier, at 7.45am to visit Volunteer Point; a cruise ship had arrived overnight, and we hoped to avoid the hordes. Volunteer Point is where there is a King Penguin breeding colony and one of the highlights of the holiday. It is another longish drive along un-metalled roads to Volunteer Farm, followed by another one-and-three-quarter-hour drive across a boggy low-lying area of Oceanic Heath to finally reach the penguin colonies.

A few birds were seen as we travelled, with Rufus- chested Plover (Dotterel) being the most frequent and interesting, but several Long-tailed Meadowlark and Black-throated Finch were also seen, along with the odd Correndera (Falkland) Pipit.

On reaching Volunteer Shanty, the cottage where the warden lives, it is only a short distance along the beach to the King Penguin colony, which is the largest in the Falkland Islands; these birds are at the northern limit of their global range here, but the colony is slowly increasing in size: this year there were over 2,000 pairs.

There were a couple of Gentoo Penguin colonies, before we reached the King Penguins, while we had to take care, as a number of Two-banded Plover were nesting along the beach side. On reaching the warden's hut we were able to see in the distance the magnificent sight of the King Penguins and, as we started to walk out, we passed several groups of adult birds, either loitering or heading to the beach.

On reaching the main colony it was obvious that only a few of the pairs had eggs, being still early in the season, with many of the birds still displaying. We spent a couple of hours here, most of the time before the horde of other vehicles arrived. It was great watching the antics of these enchanting birds. Almost all last year's chicks were still present, some still in their fluffy brown plumage, with others at different stages of moulting their downy feathers, showing their bright new shiny plumage, but still unsuccessfully trying to beg food from the returning adults and occasionally coming up to us to try their luck, begging in anticipation of food. With eggs having only been recently laid, there were very few predators, only an odd Brown (Falkland) Skua and Dolphin Gull, while a Red-backed Hawk also put in a brief appearance. By now we had numerous good photographs of the engaging King Penguins and headed back to the parking area.

After lunching, we started the long journey back across the bog at the same time as a group of other vehicles. There are numerous routes and vehicles frequently get stuck, so recent local knowledge is invaluable, although even we got temporarily bogged down at one point. We had left slightly earlier to try to get back to Stanley for the possible pelagic trip we had been promised, to make up for the one missed on our return to Stanley; this would have taken us out beyond Kidney Island. Sadly, on reaching Volunteer Point Farm and coming back in radio range, we were informed this was not possible as our boat had gone out on an emergency to another ship. This for us was a real disappointment.

On our journey back, we stopped at the site of two shot-up helicopters, where we also found the endemic Woolly Falkland Daisy.

Arriving back in Stanley slightly earlier enabled some free time, with some of the group attempting to catch up on visits what they had missed last time, such as Stanley Museum, the Cathedral and War Memorials, although some last-minute shopping took precedence for many.

## Day 17

Friday 17th November

### Stanley & flight back

With our flight home from Mount Pleasant being just after 10 am, we had to make an early start from Stanley, with the drive to the airport being the best part of 1.5 hours and an early check-in required. It was also quite foggy and with steaming up of the vehicle windows it was not easy to see wildlife, but a few now extremely familiar birds were seen, including lots of Upland Geese, as well as Long-tailed Meadowlark and Dark-faced Ground Tyrant.

The queuing and airport formalities were far quicker and less burdensome than on some previous visits, but we still had quite a wait until our flight was called; this providing time for drinks or to chat or read. Once away, we made good time to Cape Verde our refuelling stop, but it was dark by the time we arrived, so nothing of interest was seen, but it did provide a pleasant break and a leg stretch on the long flight. Most of us then managed at least to get more sleep on the remainder of the journey.

## Day 18

Saturday 18th November

### Onward journeys home

On our arrival at Brize Norton it took a little time to obtain our baggage, with the ticket allocation etc. After the usual farewells, everyone headed off to their various destinations, with several of us going by Charlie's taxi to collect our vehicles.

Thus ended a very pleasant and successful tour, a large part of which was due too the particularly lovely group members.

### Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) to sign up.

### Naturetrek Facebook

We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans.

Setting up a personal profile at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!

## Species Lists

Birds (c = about; + = more than)

Common Name	Scientific Name	November															
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>															1500+	
Gentoo Penguin	<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>		500*	50C		6	4000+	5000+		4000+	1000+	300+			500+	800+	
Rockhopper Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>			700+			2000+	4000+		1000+		4	2000c		30+		
Macaroni Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>						5	2		1			2				
Magellanic Penguin	<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>		8	10	5	7	100+	30+		20c	11				1	16	
White-tufted Grebe	<i>Rollandia rolland</i>					8		11	7			2					
Silvery Grebe	<i>Podiceps occipitalis</i>					20c		12	11	7							
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>		4	30c	10	15	16	50c	4	60c	20c	20+	70+		40c	2	
Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	20c	40+	15	30+	20+	40+	15	12	100+	50+	15	20+	10	20+	3	
Southern (Silver-grey) Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialisoides</i>														14		
Slender-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>														2		
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>															30+	
Rock Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>		20c	50+	12	2	30+	20+	15	20+	100+	10	12	6	20c	8	
Imperial Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i>		3	300+	16		5	200+	8	500+	8	20c	100+	2	4	8	
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>			5		2			3	1	6	3					
Black-necked Swan	<i>Cygnus melancoryphus</i>					3	2	1				10					
Ruddy-headed Goose	<i>Chloephaga rubidiceps</i>	7	18	10	40c	40+	8	30+	8	12	6	20c	20+		8	7	
Upland Goose	<i>Chloephaga picta</i>	60+	150+	20c	100C	150+	130+	200+	20c	50+	30c	150c	30c	2	50c	7	6
Kelp Goose	<i>Chloephaga hybrida</i>		12	8	15	6	4	6		4	4	8			4		
Crested Duck	<i>Lophonetta specularioides</i>		7	6	96	10	6	8	7	16	12	7	5		14	3	
Falkland Steamer Duck	<i>Tachyeres brachydactyla</i>		30	8	40+	12	20+	150+	200C	10	8	6			1	2	
Flying Steamer Duck	<i>Tachyeres patachonicus</i>							4	2	2		4					
Yellow-billed Teal	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>		18		50+	120+		120+	10	6	7	12				300+	
Chiloe Wigeon	<i>Mareca sibilatrix</i>					8		11		1		2			10		
Yellow-billed Pintail	<i>Anas georgica</i>					7		5	5			2			6		
Silver Teal	<i>Spatula versicolor</i>	2				7		1		3							
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	2	8	5	12	9	24	12	7	20+	14	30c	12	2	4	8	
Variable (Red-backed) Hawk	<i>Geranoaetus polyosoma</i>		1	2								4	1				
Striated Caracara	<i>Phalco boenus australis</i>		7	12	20c	7	6	2	3	20c	17		2	1			
Southern Crested Caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>		3		3	4		16	1			8			2		
Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>	2															

Common Name	Scientific Name	November															
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Blackish Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ater</i>		6	4	4	4			3								
Magellanic Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus leucopodus</i>		7	4	100+	70c	50+	50+	40+	20c	15	10	4	15	10	7	
Two-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius falklandicus</i>		4	3	10	5	20+	20c	16	30+	20c	5			25	9	
Rufous-chested Plover (Dotterel)	<i>Charadrius modestus</i>	3					2	12	2			4	3		6	11	
South American (Magellanic) Snipe	<i>Gallinago paraguaiae</i>				3		5			15	6				2	7	
White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>				20+		3	25c	20c	25c	20		14		30c		
Snowy Sheathbill	<i>Chionis alba</i>		1		3		3	14		12	9	2	22		1		
Brown (Antarctic) Skua	<i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i>	4	10	6	12	6	14	16		30+	25c	2			4	2	
Dolphin Gull	<i>Leucophaeus scoresbii</i>			20c	2	2	1	30+	5	50+	20c	8	20+	2	12	3	
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	200c	50+	30c	80+	60c	200+	100+	80+	70c	40c	20+	20c	15	20+		
Brown-hooded Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus maculipennis</i>			1	12	18		10	9	20c	16				1		
South American Tern	<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>		30+	20+	10	8	3		7	20c	8	1	8		1		
American Barn Owl	<i>Tyto furcata</i>												1				
Chilean Swallow	<i>Tachycineta leucopyga</i>		3														
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>					1	1		1	1	5	3	!				
Blackish Cinclodes (Tussac-bird)	<i>Cinclodes antarcticus</i>		20c	20+	50+	30c					40+	20+					
Dark-faced Ground Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola macloviana</i>		8	5	5	3	7	3	6	2		3	3		1	3	1
Correndera (Falkland) Pipit	<i>Anthus correndera</i>		1			1	7	3	2		1	10	3		3	9	
Grass Wren	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>							1		9	2	4	2		2		
Cobb's Wren	<i>Troglodytes cobbi</i>		3	2	7	1				10	5						
Austral (Falkland) Thrush	<i>Turdus falcklandii</i>	10	30+	20+	6	5	20c	20c	14	20c	16	2	20c	2	10		
Patagonian Mockingbird	<i>Mimus patagonicus</i>						1										
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	8	3	12							50+	10	8		12	6	
Mourning Sierra Finch	<i>Phygilus fruticeti</i>												1				
Black-chinned Siskin	<i>Spinus barbatus</i>		14	10	12	10	6	6	6	4	4		2		5		
Black-throated Finch	<i>Melanodera melanodera</i>		10	7	30c	8	12			30+	20+		15		12	14	
Long-tailed Meadowlark	<i>Leistes loyca</i>	5	6	20c	25c	20c	30+	30+	5	4	2	16	10	2	8	9	3

## Mammals

Killer Whale	<i>Occinus orca</i>									7	5						
Peale's Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus australis</i>											2					
Commerson's Dolphin	<i>Cephalorhynchus commersonii</i>												2				
Southern Sea Lion	<i>Otaria byronia</i>			2			6	9		1					20+		
Whale Sp	Sp.														1		

Common Name	Scientific Name	November															
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Southern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga leonina</i>		1		40+	3					60c	80c			15		
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	20c	16													16	

## Plants

Scientific name	English name	Date First Seen	Scientific name	English name	Date First Seen
<i>Acaena lucida</i>	Native Yarrow	12th	<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>	Pineappleweed	10th
<i>Acaena lucida</i>	Yarrow	9th	<i>Mentha spicata</i>	Spearmint	13th
<i>Acaena magellanica</i>	Prickly-burr	11th	<i>Myriophyllum quitense</i>	Water-milfoil	10th
<i>Aira praecox</i>	Early Hair-grass	4th	<i>Myrteola nummularia</i>	Teaberry	5th
<i>Ammophila arenaria</i>	Marram	4th	<i>Nassauvia gaudichaudii</i>	Coastal Nassauvia	5th
<i>Apium australe</i>	Wild Celery	8th	<i>Olysinium (Sisyrinchium) filifolium</i>	Pale Maiden	3rd
<i>Armeria curvifolia (macloviana)</i>	Falkland Thrift	5th	<i>Oxalis enneaphylla</i>	Scurvygrass	10th
<i>Azorella selago</i>	Cushion Azorella	2nd	<i>Parodiochloe flabellata</i>	Tussac / Tussac-grass	2nd
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	European Daisy	5th	<i>Pilosella (Hieracium) aurantiaca</i>	Orange Hawkweed	14th
<i>Blechnum magellanicum</i>	Tall-fern	7th	<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-grass	11th
<i>Blechnum penna-marina</i>	Small-fern	4th	<i>Psychrophila (Caltha) sagittata</i>	Arrow-leaved Marigold	5th
<i>Bolax gummifera</i>	Balsam-bog	3rd	<i>Ranunculus acaulis</i>	Skottsberg's Buttercup	4th
<i>Cardamine glacialis</i>	Bitter-cress	5th	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Sheep's Sorrel	3rd
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear Chickweed	5th	<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock	3rd
<i>Chilotrichum diffusum</i>	Fachine	2nd	<i>Rumex magellanicus</i>	Southern Dock	3rd
<i>Cortaderia pilosa</i>	Whitegrass	5th	<i>Senecio candidans</i>	Sea Cabbage	3rd
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot Grass	2nd	<i>Senecio jacobea</i>	Ragwort	5th
<i>Empetrum rubrum</i>	Diddle-dee	2nd	<i>Senecio littoralis</i>	Woolly Falkland Daisy (Ragwort)	7th
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Common Stork's-bill	3rd	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel	3rd
<i>Gunnera magellanica</i>	Pigvine	3rd	<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Prickly Sow-thistle	12th
<i>Hierochloe redolens</i>	Cinnamon-grass	6th	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Dandelion	2nd
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog	7th	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	8th
<i>Juncus scheuzerioides</i>	Native Rush	7th	<i>Tripleurospermum maritimum</i>	Scentless Mayweed	13th
<i>Laphangium (Gnaphalium) affine</i>	Falkland Cudweed	5th	<i>Ulex europaea</i>	Gorse	2nd

---

Scientific name	English name	Date First Seen	Scientific name	English name	Date First Seen
<i>Leptinella scariosa</i>	Buttonweed	12th	<i>Veronica (Hebe) elliptica</i>	Native Boxwood	3rd
<i>Leucheria suaveolens</i>	Vanilla Daisy	7th	<i>Viola maculata</i>	Common or Native Yellow Violet	10th
<i>Luzula alopecurus</i>	Native Wood-rush	10th			