

## **Trip Report – 21+ days (birding) trip from Punta Arenas to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula and back (with Hurtigruten), 18<sup>th</sup> February – 12<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

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### **Outline**

In February – March 2023 I went on a, once in a lifetime, 3-week long, Hurtigruten expedition cruise from Punta Arenas in southern Chile to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula and back with my best (non-birding) friend, Gary Hitchen.

It came about as he had visited me in South Queensferry a considerable while beforehand, and during his stay we had visited Ken Shaw, my best (birding) friend, and Amanda Shaw in Anstruther, Fife. Gary and Ken had met previously when Ken and I had stayed with Gary en-route on our ill-fated Elegant Tern twitch, and they get on very well.

During the visit, Ken (the most well-travelled person I know) told Gary the story of visiting Shackleton's grave in Grytviken, South Georgia, whilst he was on his epic mid-Atlantic islands birding expedition cruise.

A very few days later Gary and I were at his place in Barrowford, Nelson, Lancashire. Here we arranged to meet a friend of mine. Tegan Newman, who happened to be staying with friends of hers in nearby Skipton. Tegan is a seabird ecologist, who Ken and I first met on St. Agnes, where she was involved in the rodent eradication programme, and subsequently on the Isle of May, where she had monitored seabirds for Centre of Ecology and Hydrology.

She had subsequently worked on Bird Island in South Georgia. And, as a result, she too told Gary the story of visiting Shackleton's grave.

As Gary put it, "I didn't know you had two friends, let alone two friends who had been to Shackleton's grave!"

"So what?", I hear you cry. Well, Gary is a massive aficionado of the whole, incredible Shackleton story, and hearing from two of my friends about their experiences visiting Shackleton's grave piqued his curiosity, and he thought, "Why can't I visit Shackleton's grave?"

He did some research, and a few days later sent a small group of us (all university friends) an e-mail message suggesting he was going to participate in the Hurtigruten 'In-depth Antarctica, Falklands & South Georgia Expedition' taking place in February – March 2023, and providing a link to the same, and asking if any of us was interested. It was a year off, but within days he and I had booked. Non-birder or not, there was no way I was letting him see penguins, albatrosses, whales, *etc.*, without me!!!

Beside being stupendous places with stupendous wildlife, an added bonus for me would be completing my set of continents, having been to New Zealand, and as such Oceania, a few years earlier,

Whilst Antarctica (and South Georgia and the Falklands) offered limited avifaunas, these were largely unique, and often in incredible abundance. And the same went for the supporting cast of cetaceans, pinnipeds, *etc.*

So, although the trip was incredibly expensive, I very quickly committed to it. A once-in-a-lifetime experience, with my very best mate (with whom I had previously had very successful road-trips to the Hebrides, Iceland and Cantabria, Asturias and Galicia in Northern Spain), offering fantastic wildlife and landscape opportunities and the opportunity to visit my last continent, where an incredibly small number of people have ever been.

An element in my decision making was that a good friend, Carol Carrington, had told me all about going on Hurtigruten cruises along the Norwegian coastline to the North Cape and back, and she only had good things to say about Hurtigruten.

In this sense I had no hesitation with booking the trip, despite the expense.

However, once I had stumped up the deposit (half of the overall cost) I began to have some serious reservations. Administratively, Hurtigruten proved to be abysmal; their after-sales service was truly shocking. Gary and I had serious misgivings about what we had signed up for. We expected way better given what we had just invested. Hard to explain now, but, for example, I was very keen to know whether there would be an ornithological leader on our particular expedition cruise. A simple question, but one which no one could provide an answer for. Similarly, and way more problematically, Gary, despite being very fit, couldn't get his doctor to sign off his health declaration form which was a mandatory requirement before embarking. He sought advice (seriously fearing for his deposit) but there was no response from Hurtigruten.

Frustrating, maddening and very, very disappointing, given what we had invested.

I was able relatively easily to do my research. As the avifaunas involved on each of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula were so limited, this largely involved sourcing and printing of the Avibase checklists for each. Whether I would have any help identifying some of the more challenging seabirds – the prions, the large albatrosses and the diving-petrels remained unanswered, but I was able to do my own thing.

As my Hurtigruten adventure commenced in Santiago in Central Chile, I arranged to fly to Santiago early and had five days very good birding in Central Chile. This involved birding with a guide (Rodrigo Reyes from Birdwatching Chile) and seeing as many bird species, and as much of the (central part of the) country, as possible. The flights arranged for me by Dial-a-Flight took me from Edinburgh via London Heathrow direct to Santiago a week in advance of the scheduled Hurtigruten rendezvous time and date, in order to facilitate this.

My time birding in Central Chile is the subject of a separate trip report.

So, I arrived in Santiago on the morning of Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup> February, and with some trouble (the hotel courtesy airport bus system was maddingly chaotic) I eventually arrived at the perfectly adequate La Quinta by Wyndham Hotel (an anonymous, modern big city airport type hotel).

On Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> February, after an excellent pelagic on my last day with them, Rodrigo and his driver, Carlos, and I eventually delivered me back at the La Quinta by Wyndham Hotel, after five days of excellent birding and sight-seeing. We said our fond farewells, and I then checked in and moseyed around in the room waiting for my friend Gary to arrive after his flight from London Heathrow.

After significant flight delay and much airport transfer trauma a la mine he duly arrived. We circumvented his check-in so that he could shower first having travelled for '24 hours' as I told the woman at reception when she 'phoned to request Gary do so.

Anyway, we later repaired to the restaurant bar for a couple of beers and a meal, before we retired to bed.

The following day, our adventure began. In what was a full on 21 or so days, I managed some 75 bird species, plus a lot of cetaceans and pinnipeds, in a wide range of sites and places, with some very definite, incredible highlights. I'll save any further explanation of these for later, rather than summarising them here.

## **Hurtigruten**

As mentioned, once we had committed to our expedition cruise, our experiences with Hurtigruten's after-sales administration team were, frankly, appalling. Nothing we wanted to resolve (no matter how simple) was satisfactorily addressed.

As such, both Gary and I had travelled to Santiago, Chile, where our trip commenced, with some serious misgivings.

And sadly, once we were there, and in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in central Santiago, where we convened with the rest of those on our expedition cruise, this deep dis-satisfaction with Hurtigruten continued, as it did the following day as we transferred from Santiago to Punta Arenas by internal flight. The Hurtigruten personnel involved in managing this process were equally 'shocking' in their inability to provide answers we wanted (no matter how simple) or to organise simple logistics. For example, once in Punta Arenas we were chaperoned onto a fleet of waiting coaches for a vaguely bizarre guided tour around the town. Hurtigruten had known our names and nationalities for weeks, and we were repeatedly asked to confirm who we were, but, bizarrely, we, and a good number of other English-speaking clientele, were ushered onto a coach on which the local guide gave the guided tour almost solely in German. Eh?

However, the moment we boarded the MS Fram in Punta Arenas all this changed.

The onboard administration personnel, the expedition leaders (guides), the crew of the ship, and the waiting, cleaning, *etc.*, personnel were all truly exceptional. We went from total dis-satisfaction with the Hurtigruten experience to total satisfaction with it.

It would appear that the in-country personnel (in both the UK and Chile) simply weren't very good at their jobs (poorly recruited, rewarded, supported, organised?) whereas the on-board personnel were just the opposite.

The Hurtigruten 'In-depth Antarctica, Falklands & South Georgia Expedition' enabled me to visit places I could never dream of ever visiting (I'd never imagined visiting including the southern tip of South America, the Falklands, South Georgia or the Antarctic. Incredibly expensive, but it enabled me to have some incredible wildlife experiences in amazing places, and it proved to be an incredible experience for Gary too, in terms of getting to places he'd read about when reading books about Antarctic explorers.

## Chile

Santiago, the capital of Chile, is located in the country's central valley and is the centre of the Santiago Metropolitan Region, which has a population of 7 million people, representing 40% of Chile's total population. It, and the other urban areas in Central Chile totally dominant the country; the area is very developed and European feeling, with all the benefits (and problems) that modern western life provides and creates.

This said, fantastic wild places and spaces are relatively easily accessible from these urban areas.

As the heart of Chile, central Chile is relatively racially and culturally diverse, which, amongst other things makes for reasonable variety of cuisine, including traditional Chilean, Indian, Chinese, *etc.* it has to be said though, Chilean food and drink are very much in the shadow of the neighbours to the north, Peru, in particular.

I did some birding in and around Santiago, but, as I say, that is another story, written up in another trip report.

Punta Arenas, at the southern end of Chile, has a very distinct 'end-of-the-world' to it (although it's the largest city south of 46°S). It has a population of some 120,000, Despite its remoteness, it again is comparatively well-developed and European feeling (a bit like a Hispanic outpost in Northern Scandinavia). Incredibly, there is a large Croatian population, amongst other nationalities. We didn't get to eat or drink there, so I cannot comment on the food and drink.

I did some birding in central Punta Arenas (on the sea-front mainly) and also en-route between the airport and the city centre and vice versa. This added some species to my trip list that were not seen elsewhere, include Black-faced Ibis, Coscoroba Swan and Chilean Flamingo.

## Falkland Islands

The remote Falkland Islands we visited in the west of the archipelago (New, Carcass, West Point and Saunders Islands) had a strangely familiar feel to them, as did, in particular, the capital, Port Stanley. The islands (which had incredibly small populations, amounting to three or four families at most) felt like remote British offshore islands – part Scilly (well, it was the Southern Hemisphere late summer) and part Hebrides or Shetland. Port Stanley was very British with a feel of Kirkwall or Lerwick excepting that!

We compounded this feel by having beer and fish and chips for lunch in a Globe Tavern in the centre of town (sadly the Upland Goose is long gone). This was, understandably, the only meal and only alcohol we consumed away from the MS Fram in the entire trip, but more of that later.

The Falkland Islands avifauna is comprised of some 247 species. A high proportion of these are seabirds and or scarce migrants. We managed 47 species, and these included both endemics, Falklands Steamer Duck and Cobb's Wren.

South Georgia was as you might imagine; a huge landscape / seascape of mountains and glaciers (no longer reaching the sea!), which is a tale of shamelessly exploited but miraculously recovered wildlife populations. For me, visiting long-abandoned whaling stations was vaguely akin to visiting Auschwitz or Belsen or the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. The population in summer comprises some 25 – 30 people based in the metropolis that is Grytviken / Prince Edward Point.

The South Georgia avifauna is comprised of some 80 species. Again, a high proportion of these are seabirds and or scarce migrants. I managed 24 species, and again, these included all of the endemics including South Georgia Shag and South Georgia Pipit (as well as South Georgia Pintail, which may or may not be an endemic species).

The Antarctic (Peninsula) was everything I imagined, and yet beyond my imagination. We visited a range of sites on the peninsula including islands off the peninsula and places on the peninsula itself. These were varied in their environment (ranging from the slag-heap landscape of the collapsed caldera which comprised Deception Island to the fantastic snow and icescapes of Tay Head on Joinville Island or Hidden Bay on the peninsula (the most southerly place we visited)).

Obviously, the permanent human population of Antarctic is nil, excepting those stationed at the many research stations. We saw several of these. As such, the environment wasn't completely pristine (for example there was an abandoned whaling station and research station / airbase of Deception Island) but, that said, with the possible exception of Tambopata in the Peruvian Amazon or maybe Ulva Island off Stewart Island in New Zealand it was, predictably, as completely unspoilt as anywhere I have visited. The whole management of the burgeoning 'eco-tourism' industry in this respect was fascinating for me.

The Antarctica avifauna is comprised of some 62 species. A small proportion of these are scarce seabirds and / or scarce migrants (including Barn Owl!!). We managed 25 species, but these didn't include the two endemics (Emperor Penguin and Antarctic Petrel (which, with Snow Petrel, was my biggest 'dip' of the trip)).

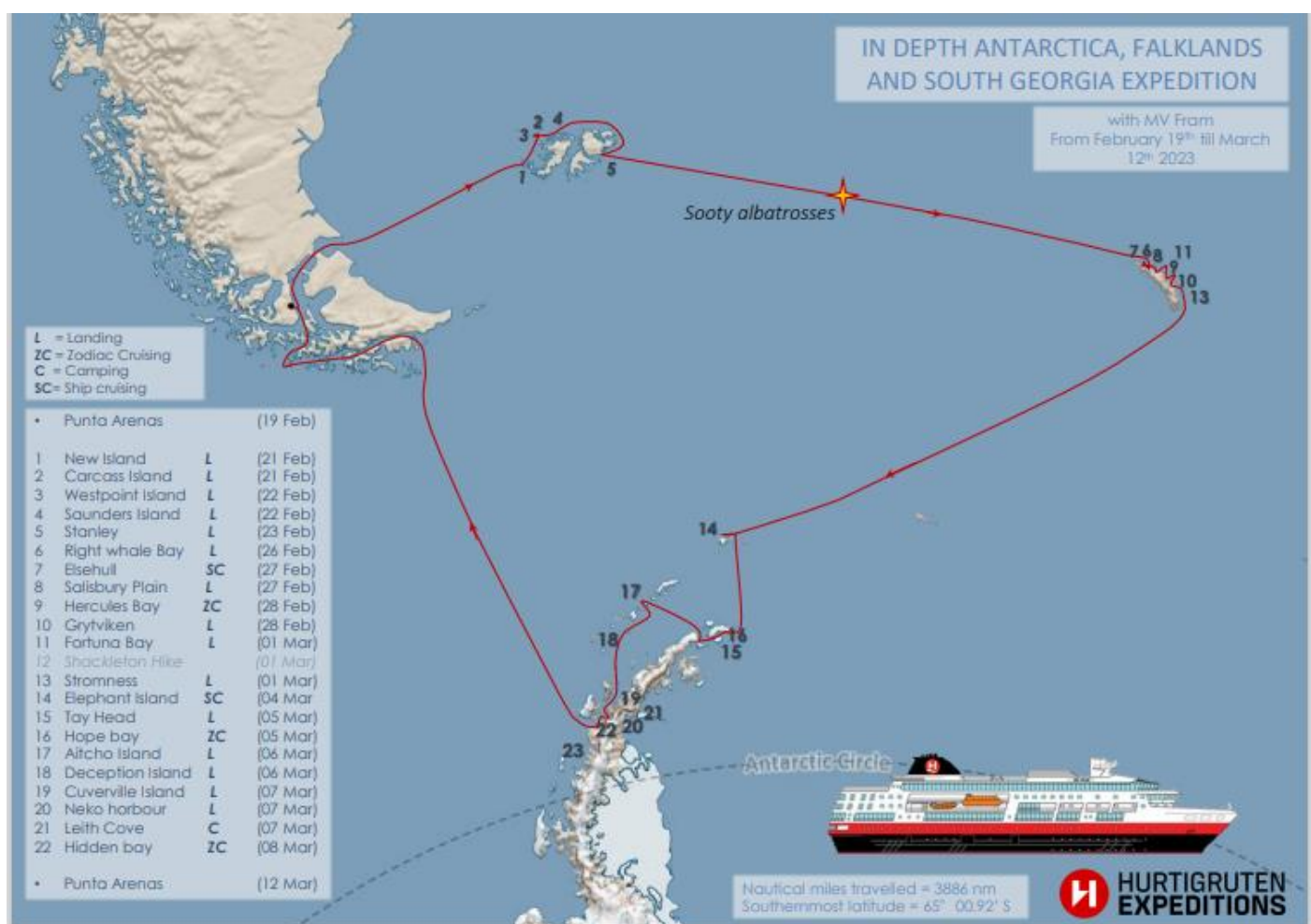
## Logistics – (Getting There, Costs, Health and Safety, Weather, Literature and Resources, Clothing and Equipment, Guide, etc.)

As suggested, this 'trip' convened in an upmarket Santiago hotel. This meant I had to get there. I therefore had to arrange my long-haul flights to Chile from London (and also my flight from Edinburgh to London Heathrow) which I did with Dial-a-Flight.

I booked my flights months and months in advance, and in doing so, ultimately benefited from savings due to the subsequent fuel price hikes; it cost £975 for my return flights from Edinburgh to Santiago via Heathrow Terminal 5, meaning once I'd got to Edinburgh Airport and checked it in, I didn't see my big bag again until it appeared on the baggage carousel at (the very good) Santiago (Benitez) Airport.

Rounded up / down, I paid an incredible £11,500 to Hurtigruten, which undoubtedly is an extortionate amount of money. However, comparable Oceanwide / Wildwings trips cost around about the same (or a little more) and are a little shorter. That said, they are undoubtedly more wildlife focussed, although, the MS Fram did have a very good range of different specialist leaders including, thankfully, a very good ornithological leader (plus a team of cetacean monitors who were onboard the ship as part of a commendable arrangement with Hurtigruten). In addition, as required to operate in Antarctic, but perhaps additional so as well, the Hurtigruten ship and crew were environmentally responsible.

I quickly reconciled myself with this cost, on the basis that you get what you pay for and it was (part of a once in a lifetime trip) and also as this covered everything, including three weeks accommodation, all the food I could every wish for of incredible quality and variety at breakfast, lunch and dinner, hot drinks and snacks and, if you played the system, enough free beer and / or red wine with your dinner to mean you didn't have to pay the exorbitant Norwegian prices in the bar later on. It also – clearly, involved two three hour long internal flights between Santiago and Punta Arenas and vice versa, and our 'travel' between Punta Arenas, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula and back during the course of three weeks (see Figure 1). And it also included a team of very knowledgeable leaders who provided very good lectures and were on hand on deck or during visits ashore to provide informative information.



**Figure 1, The route taken and the places visited**

I needed no additional inoculations or medications for my trip (for neither Chile or the Falkland Islands, South Georgia or the Antarctic Peninsula). I didn't need them, but there were medical staff onboard (there's no hospital to go to in Antarctica!).

Whilst we were away, the UK experienced a reasonably cold spell of winter weather. I mention this because the weather I experienced in the Falklands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula was, quirkily, not dissimilar. At these latitudes February / March in the southern hemisphere is the equivalent to August / September – late summer or early autumn.

We experienced little rain or snow, and it was progressively colder from the Falklands to South Georgia to the Antarctic Peninsula, with daytime temperatures of around 10°C in the Falklands, 1 - 3°C on the Antarctic Peninsula, and something between in South Georgia. I remember getting cold and wet on one or two occasions involving Zodiac trips, but otherwise I was always sufficiently wrapped up (sometimes overly so).

With the exception of a period of anabatic winds one day when we were on South Georgia it wasn't very windy either. That said, the Captain of the MS Fram was very good at getting ahead of, or around, weather systems. As a result, although it was 'lumpy' sometimes, especially crossing from South Georgia to the Antarctic Peninsula and from the Antarctic Peninsula to South America through the Drake Passage, we didn't really experience rough sea conditions. I'm not the best of sailors, but thankfully, I never once felt remotely ill. The ship was incredibly stable, and if there was a swell, invariably we were sailing directly into it, rather than across it.

Prior to departure, Hurtigruten proved information (of mixed value) about what equipment was required. This included thermals, various handwear, footwear and headwear for the cold conditions, and waterproof trousers for the wet conditions (in particular, during Zodiac trips!). Better, Hurtigruten provided a good quality (if bright!) Hurtigruten branded Helly Hansen waterproof jacket (which was yours to keep) and Muckboot type Wellington boots as well as good quality lifejackets (both of which were yours for the duration of the trip). Walking shoes sufficed in the Falklands, where conditions underfoot were sometimes a tad wettish at some sites, but otherwise fine; in South Georgia and Antarctica I needed the issued boots for walking in often snowy, slushy conditions.

Beyond this, I was appropriately kitted out with what was standard birding gear for the birding in a cold, wet conditions, including heavyweight trousers, long-sleeved shirts, jumpers, walking shoes and miscellaneous hats, sunglasses, *etc.* In addition to binoculars, I had my camera, and on the advice of my friend David Steel, the Reserve Manager on the Isle of May, who acted as a leader on a couple of similar trips immediately before mine, I didn't have my telescope with me.

I used the more than adequate for my purposes, 'Birds of Chile including the Antarctic Peninsula, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia' authored by Alvaro Jarmillo and, 'Antarctica: A Guide to the Wildlife' by Tony Soper (both of which proved more than adequate and was a sight more convenient to have in my rucksack or pocket than the immense. 'A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife' by Hadoram Shirihai). In addition, the ornithological leader, Dr George Swan, was excellent (and arguably the best of all of the leaders on the MS Fram, who were all very good at what they did), and he used e-bird to log our sightings (*e.g.*, [MS Fram Antarctica, South Georgia & The Falklands - eBird Trip Report](#)).

Lastly, I have to touch upon our fellow passengers. Suffice to say, Gary and I had no time at all for 90+% of them. They comprised a mix of mainly older white men and women from, in this approximate order, the UK, the US of A, Germany, Australia and Germany (ship tannoy announcements were given in English and German) followed by small numbers of other nationalities, including New Zealanders, Austrians, Danes, *etc.* Invariably, they were just odd, with little or nothing in common with us. Those we did relate to quickly formed small cliques with whom they sat at every meal, so avoiding the circulating that was inflicted on the rest of us. That said, Gary and I adopted Chris, a Brit with whom nominally we had nothing in common with (he was an ex-Army Sandhurst trained officer, with an 'interesting' Army and post-Army stories, who lived on an estate in deepest Kent). There were also two brothers from Watford who were both football fans and interested in the wildlife but otherwise....

Suffice to say, the vast majority of our fellow passengers we actively avoided. We / I couldn't work out how they had obtained the wherewithal to be participating in the expedition cruise involved, as often, frankly, they weren't the brightest. Crime? Failed marriage? Inheritance? Enough. But weird.

Conversely, the Filipino waiting and cleaning staff (*etc.*) were generally all lovely, as were the expedition leaders and the rest of the crew.

Hurtigruten obviously have a website, details of which are easily obtainable as needs be.

## **Day 1 – Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February**

The day involved waking up at our airport hotel near the airport in Santiago and travelling to Mandarin Oriental Hotel and convening with rest of Hurtigruten passengers, before fleeing the hotel into central Santiago as 'tourists' before returning there and staying overnight.

Gary and I got up when we woke up, and having showered, packed, *etc.*, we made our way to reception and attempted to organise a taxi. However, we were advised that using Uber was the way to go.

So, Gary loaded his new bank card to his existing Uber app. and was then very successfully able to organise the first of our Ubers of the day, from our airport hotel to the altogether swankier Mandarin Oriental in 'central' Santiago.

The only slight hitch with this was that we were reliant on WiFi, so, for example, we had to split up – me waiting at the roadside with our bags, on the lookout for our car, whilst Gary monitored its impending arrival on the App using the WiFi in the hotel lobby.

Anyway, it all worked very well and soon enough we were at the Hurtigruten rendezvous hotel. And all very swish it was too. We couldn't, though, check-in as it was too early for any rooms to be ready, but we arranged to leave our bags in a storeroom with some difficulty.

We then attempted with considerable further difficulty to locate some Hurtigruten presence in the hotel. We actually gave up in the end and left, only to locate a random representative outside, who, with some reticence, guided us to the Hurtigruten room. Here we achieved very little other than to get ticked off on some sheet, and given an envelope and some courtesy bottles of water and peach juice.

We again left the hotel and walked a short distance to a mall, where we quickly located a suitable breakfast venue and a suitable breakfast.

Breakfast consumed, we hailed another Uber to take us to the older part of Santiago, which we explored on foot, taking in government buildings, the cathedral, the original market, *etc.*, before we crossed the 'river' and explored Bellavista, where we coffeed, caked and Korean souped, and joyously checked the Burnley score, which was Luton Town 0, Burnley 1.

We then Ubered back to the hotel, where we visited the pool, *etc.*, and later, having established we weren't getting a meal, returned to the mall for a couple of beers and a Mexican meal. I managed to fall when paying the bill before we returned to the hotel and were 'Hurtigruten organised' into leaving our packed bags in the lobby overnight.

It wasn't a day for birding but I saw Feral Pigeon and Austral Thrush and heard Monk Parakeet.

## **Day 2 – Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February**

The day involved transferring from our hotel in Santiago to the Santiago Benitez Airport and flying from there to Punta Arenas before being a tourist in Punta Arenas and finally boarding the MS Fram and embarking on the expedition. That night was our first night in our cabin on the MS Fram and we were at sea, bound for the Falkland Islands.

The day commenced at a very user-unfriendly 05:30 when our alarms simultaneously caused us to arise and prepare for our long day ahead.

Quickly washed and packed, we exited our room and descended nine floors to the lobby where we were given a breakfast bag and asked, group by group, to identify our main bag and then watch it being loaded into the 'hold' of our allotted coach, one of some six or seven... .

Soon enough we departed for the airport where we disembarked, checked in, passed through security, *etc.*, with minimum hassle, although being herded and asked to follow Hurtigruten staffers with Hurtigruten placards was a bit alien.

Anyway, without great long waits anywhere we were quickly enough at the gate and then boarded our internal domestic flight (or charter flight?) to Punta Arenas.

By now Gary and I had a reasonably accurate idea about our fellow travellers. Most were elderly couples with very little diversity. Few seemed very interesting. One or two seemed to be potential 'friends'.

The flight was three hours and provided epic views of the length of Chile (or certainly that part of Chile south of Santiago, including snow-capped volcanoes, lakers, glaciers, *etc.*).

Eventually, we descended and circled back to land at Punta Arenas airport where we disembarked and collected our baggage, *etc.*, with minimum fuss (excepting the American woman who took exception to me moving forward when a space appeared amongst the people crowded around the baggage carousel..... ).

Anyway, we were then allocated onto a series of six or seven coaches, to, ultimately, the harbour at which the MS Fram was moored, but this was via a guided tour of Punta Arenas, including the interesting museum. This was fine in principle, but in practice we were ushered onto a coach on which the Hurtigruten guide mainly provided a German commentary..... .

However, I managed a few birds en-route and we visited a vista, the museum and the main plaza, from which, finally, we were free to walk on our own.

I wandered down to the sea-front and back before we again boarded the coach and were delivered to the harbour where our bags were x-rayed and we were issued with personnel identify / security keycards.

We eventually boarded the MS Fram and Gary and I found we had been upgraded to a cabin on the 6<sup>th</sup> deck (the good news), which, unfortunately had a double bed (the bad news). This was quickly rectified though.

The rest of the day was spent familiarising ourselves with the ship and ship routine, having a buffet evening meal, *etc.*

Birds seen were Coscoroba Swan, Chilean Flamingo, Southern Lapwing, Brown-hooded Gull, Dolphin Gull, Kelp Gull, Chilean Skua, Southern Giant Petrel, Imperial Cormorant, Black-faced Ibis, Variable Hawk?, and House Sparrow.

### **Day 3 – Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February**

All day at sea on the MS Fram.

Our first (full) day aboard the MS Fram commenced at breakfast, before we assembled on the foredeck for what became a routine birding session with the Ornithological Leader, Dr. George Swan, before then variously doing my own thing from wherever seemed best on the ship, walking around the decks, exploring, eating, resting and drinking, in something like that order.

That about covers it, excepting meeting new folk and working on our 'sufficient drink at minimal additional cost' strategy.

Birds seen during the day (mainly during the foredeck birding session) were Brown Skua, Magellanic Penguin, Northern Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Slender-billed Prion, White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater, Great Shearwater and Common Diving-petrel.

Other birds seen, but not by me, included a House Wren on the ship which eventually succumbed after it hit a window.

In addition to the birds listed I saw Peale's Dolphin.

### **Day 4 – Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February**

The day involved being at sea on the MS Fram and arriving in the Falkland Islands and visiting both New Island and Carcass Island.

As we awoke, we were stationed off New Island in the north-west extremities of the Falkland Islands.

After breakfast we prepared for our landing, having been assigned to Group 3, the Adelie Penguins..... We clambered into our gear for going ashore in the Zodiacs and assembled on the lower deck involved, before we boarded the Zodiac which was to take us ashore.

Once on the island we walked across it to a mixed colony of Southern Rockhopper Penguins and Black-browed Albatrosses. I quickly circumnavigated this as far as we were allowed and then departed promptly to try to getting some more birding in on the way back.

I frustratingly had an issue with my camera settings on my return which, thankfully, Marie sorted out. I birded both on the way back and once back at the landing place, and briefly, at least, visited the adjoining museum and shop as well as the shoreline, adding a few species in the process.

I returned to the MS Fram and disrobed and generally rested and attempted to catch up with my notes / lists. Meanwhile, we were treated to epic views of frolicking fur-seals, dolphins and Sei Whales often very close as we sailed towards Carcass Island, to the north-east, but still in the north-west extremities of the Falkland Islands.

We then lunched and rested, before we prepared for our second landing, a dry one on Carcass Island.

Here I targeted Cobb's Wren, which, fantastically, I jammed in within 100 metres or so of the jetty, freeing me up to complete the walk across the island to a mixed colony of Gentoo and Magellanic Penguins. This was hard work, but well worth it.

The birding en-route was good.

On our return, coffee or tea and cake were on offer at one of the very few houses on Carcass.

By now though Gary and I were frazzled by not knowing the Burnley score but had an agonising wait until we arrived back on the mothership to get WiFi and news of a creditable 1.1 draw at Millwall.

I rested and showered, before we dined and attended a briefing on tomorrow's adventures.

Somewhat shattered we retreated to the bar with our variously charged wine glasses, but soon enough retired to bed.

Birds seen on New Island were Upland Goose, Kelp Goose, Ruddy-headed Goose, Falkland Steamer Duck, Crested Duck, Brown Skua, Southern Rockhopper Penguin, Black-browed Albatross, Royal Albatross spp., Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Cormorant, Black-crowned Night Heron, Turkey Vulture, Variable Hawk, Striated Caracara, Blackish Cinclodes, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant, Austral Thrush, Black-chinned Siskin and Long-tailed Meadowlark.

Birds seen on Carcass Island were Upland Goose, Kelp Goose, Ruddy-headed Goose, Falkland Steamer Duck, Crested Duck, Yellow-billed Teal, Blackish Oystercatcher, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Brown Skua, Kelp Gull, Gentoo Penguin, Magellanic Penguin, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Cormorant, Imperial Cormorant, Black-crowned Night Heron, Turkey Vulture, Striated Caracara, Blackish Cinclodes, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant, Sedge Wren, Cobb's Wren, Austral Thrush, Black-chinned Siskin, Long-tailed Meadowlark and White-bridled / Black-throated Finch.

Finally, other birds seen during the day included Brown-hooded Gull, Dolphin Gull and South American Tern.

Mammals seen included Antarctic Fur-seals, Sei Whales and dolphin spp..

### **Day 5 – Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February**

The day involved being at sea on the MS Fram and visiting both West Point Island and Saunders Island.

Another day, another (Falklands) island. This time it was West Point Island, which, I knew, my friend David Steel had visited whilst on his expedition cruises a few weeks before mine.

West Point Island was in the same north-west extremities of the archipelago; it was to the immediate south-west of Carcass Island, actually, and so, again, we were stationed off the island at dawn.

Gary and I were in the advance landing party (it was Group 3's turn) and so we prepared and breakfasted early, before getting ready for a dry (and warm!) landing.

I landed on the island before Gary as there was just one space left on the first Zodiac, so, once briefed, I set off over the island ahead of him, knowing he would catch me up.

We followed the flags over the island to the waiting George at the mixed Black-browed Albatross and Southern Rockhopper Penguin colony in amongst the tussock grass.

I relatively quickly satisfied my curiosity and completed the circuit around the colony before returning to the start and George. I asked him about options for walking elsewhere from here, and, as a result, deployed Gary up the adjacent hill before wandering back in the hope of better views of Correndera Pipit at the point manned by one of the English cetacean monitoring guides.

This failed, but I enjoyed my chat before I continued back to the settlement, where, after a couple of photo-opportunities, I again indulged in the tea and coffee and cake option at the house of one of the islanders.

I explored the vegetable garden area, and then the area around the buildings closest to the jetty again for White-bridled (aka Black-throated) Finch with no success.

I then opted to return to the MS Fram, where Mr Hitchen was already holed up in our cabin.

We spent a long, leisurely interlude before lunch in the cabin and in common room area near the Science Centre we liked spending time in, me catching up with my notes, reading, *etc.*

Later, we had lunch, and then, as we had been in the first landing party in the morning, we were in the last landing party in the afternoon, so we had a long interlude before being called to board the Zodiacs to make a wet landing on Saunders Island, which was to the immediate east of Carcass Island.

This proved to be the best spectacle yet – an extensive colony of rookeries of five species of penguin – those already seen, plus a few pairs of King Penguin.

The visiting parties circumnavigated the main colony with options for climbing to an overlook above another Black-browed Albatross colony or walking further along the beach on the far side of the main colony to a Southern Rockhopper Penguin colony.



I really enjoyed the stop-off, and, besides the King Penguins, I enjoyed the walk along the beach and back.

Fantastic. The remainder of the day followed what was becoming our routine.

Birds seen on West Point Island were Upland Goose, Kelp Goose, Ruddy-headed Goose, Falkland Steamer Duck, Crested Duck, Blackish Oystercatcher, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Kelp Gull, Magellanic Penguin, Southern Rockhopper Penguin, Black-browed Albatross, Black-crowned Night Heron, Magellanic Cormorant, Turkey Vulture, Striated Caracara, Blackish Cinclodes, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant, Correndara Pipit, Sedge Wren, Austral Thrush and Black-chinned Siskin.

Birds seen on Saunders Island were Blackish Oystercatcher, Brown Skua, King Penguin, Gentoo Penguin, Magellanic Penguin, Macaroni Penguin, Southern Rockhopper Penguin, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Cormorant, Imperial Cormorant, Turkey Vulture, Striated Caracara and Blackish Cinclodes.

Other birds seen were South American Tern.

In addition to the birds seen, I also saw Sei Whales and a moth species.

### **Day 6 – Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February**

The day involved visiting Port Stanley and being at sea on the MS Fram.

A day being a tourist, a full-on tourist.

After breakfast, Gary and I were the first off the MS Fram, and, with Chris, walked from the place where we were moored at outside Port Stanley into the 'city', initially along a dedicated shore-walk, and then through the sprawl into the town centre and beyond, mainly along the front, and mainly looking at various war memorials, *etc.*, and also the mast of the SS Great Britain, the cathedral, the Governor's House, the racecourse, *etc.* We also went into the post office and purchased postcards and stamps and arranged to post them.

On our walk back into the centre of town we went to a café within the museum complex, and, having done this, opted to visit the museum itself, which proved to be a very good decision as it was a very good museum and included lots of moving material about the Falklands War.

We then visited a very good gift shop where I purchased presents for Ellen and Tessa, before having a pint of Sunrise in the Globe Tavern, before having fish and chips and a pint of Rockhopper in The Victory.

Afterwards, we continued our shopping / looking around before walking back to the MS Fram.

After a siesta I attempted another clothes wash, and we retreated to the common room area.

More of the same followed in the evening.

Birds seen were Upland Goose, Kelp Goose, Ruddy-headed Goose, Falkland Steamer Duck, Crested Duck, Yellow-billed or Speckled Teal, Blackish Oystercatcher, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Dolphin Gull, Kelp Gull, Brown Skua, Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Cormorant, Imperial Cormorant, Black-crowned Night Heron, Turkey Vulture, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant and House Sparrow.

In addition, I dipped various shorebirds seen on a 'paid-for' guided walk, but I did see Southern (or South American) Sea-lion.

### **Day 7 – Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February**

All day at sea on the MS Fram.

More of the same – with some very good seabirds seen from various decks including Grey-backed Storm-Petrel and both Light-mantled Sooty and Sooty Albatrosses, which certainly wowed George, as he'd never seen Sooty Albatross, and after some doubts, the numbers in with the Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses following the MS Fram gradually increased.

Birds seen were Brown Skua, Southern Rockhopper Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Grey-backed Storm-Petrel, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, Wandering Albatross, Southern Royal Albatross, Northern Royal Albatross, Sooty Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Northern Giant Petrel, Slender-billed Prion, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Grey Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and Great Shearwater.

A bird I didn't see which was seen was Subantarctic Shearwater.

## **Day 8 – Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February**

All day at sea on the MS Fram.

A confused start to the day ensued, as we were flummoxed by the change in time as we were in a different time zone (but as there was no internet connection our 'phones hadn't automatically updated). Once up, I enjoyed some good sea-watching – including Black-bellied Storm Petrel, Macaroni Penguin and Antarctic Prion – either side of a rushed breakfast.

Later I completed a much-needed major wash, before attending a lecture on available activities.

We later lunched / followed the Burnley v. Huddersfield Town game which fantastically ended 4.0, before variously more sea-watching, attending a lecture by George on the birds of South Georgia and testing out the hot-tub.

Subsequent birding was impaired by the Antarctic Convergence.

However, birds seen during the day were Brown Skua, King Penguin, Macaroni Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, Wandering Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Prion, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Grey Petrel, White-chinned Petrel and Great Shearwater.

Again, a bird I didn't see which was seen was Subantarctic Shearwater.

## **Day 9 – Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> February**

The day involved arriving off South Georgia and visiting Right Whale Bay before continuing along the coast of South Georgia.

From dawn onwards South Georgia hove into view, and eventually we arrived in Right Whale Bay, at the western end of the northern coastline of the island.

Here we stationed ourselves for landings to take place – in two large groups of <100, as required by the conventions that apply.

We were in the second of the two groups, and, as Group 3, Adelie Penguin, we had a seriously long wait before we were taken ashore to another King Penguin and fur-seal colony.

This was a stupendous experience – the best yet.

And the supporting cast during the whole day was very good too, involving Snowy Sheathbill, Kelp Gull, Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua, King Penguin, Gentoo Penguin, Macaroni Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Wandering Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Northern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Prion, White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater, Great Shearwater, South Georgian Diving-Petrel, South Georgia Shag and South Georgia Pipit.

In addition, we saw Fin Whales, Blue Whales, Sei Whales and Antarctic Fur-seals.

## **Day 10 – Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February**

The day involved being off South Georgia and visiting Salisbury Plain (and not visiting Elsehull) before continuing along the coast of South Georgia.

As we commenced the day, we were positioned off Elsehull on the north coast of South Georgia where we were planning to go on Zodiac trips to see Macaroni Penguins but the wind conditions didn't allow this, so we moved to a location such that we were positioned off Salisbury Plain by lunchtime instead.

Some sea-watching produced Fin Whales and a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, and some domesticity got another batch of washing done.

By lunchtime we were positioned off Salisbury Plain, where, eventually, we, as Group 3, Adelie Penguin, made our landing, late in the afternoon.

Another day, another King Penguin / Antarctic Fur-seal colony, but this one much more extensive / sizeable though, complete with fly-by pintails and pipits and a walk-through Chinstrap Penguin.

We also sampled our first Antarctic-type weather involving lumpy rain and squally wind.

Once back onboard the MS Fram we reverted to domesticity.

Birds seen were South Georgia Pintail, Kelp Gull, Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua, King Penguin, Chinstrap Penguin, Macaroni Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Wandering Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Prion, South Georgian Diving-Petrel, South Georgia Shag and South Georgia Pipit.

Besides the birds we saw Fin Whales and the ubiquitous and numerous Antarctic Fur-seals.

### **Day 11 – Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> February**

The day involved being off South Georgia and visiting both Hercules Bay and Grytviken before continuing along the coast of South Georgia.

In the morning we visited Hercules Bay which involved boarding the Zodiacs to take a closer look at the Macaroni Penguin colony and sample the general ambience of the bay as a whole. Impressive.

Afterwards, we continued along the coast towards Gyrtviken. As we did so, we saw our first vessels away from Punta Arenas and Port Stanley, including, in particular, a research vessel.

Concurrently, I communicated with Carrie Gunn who I knew from the Isle of May by WhatsApp, telling her of my impending arrival in Gyrtviken, where I knew she was based. It quickly emerged that Carrie was on said research vessel, and sadly wasn't going to be back in Grytviken / Prince Edward Point until the following day.

We disembarked by zodiac and visited the graveyard (not a sheep-pen as was speculated by two German women looking at it from the decks of the MS Fram!) and here we were given tots of a 15-year old Dalwhinnie by the captain of the MS Fram and some of the crew, so that we could toast Shackleton, which Gary and I did, despite a little local difficulty concerning photographs of the moment, given that this was the entire premise of the whole trip.

We then avoided the Southern Elephant Seals nearby and explored Gyrtviken but I was overwhelmed / museumed out and struggled to take everything in.

Instead, I concentrated on meeting Helen Balfour, my daughter Ellen's friend from the University of Aberdeen, who worked in the museum. This was lovely.

Birds seen were South Georgia Pintail, Snowy Sheathbill, Kelp Gull, Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua, King Penguin, Gentoo Penguin, Macaroni Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Prion, White-chinned Petrel, South Georgia Shag and South Georgia Pipit.

Besides the birds we obviously again saw Antarctic Fur-seals and also Southern Elephant Seals.

### **Day 12 – Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March**

The day involved being off South Georgia and visiting both Fortuna Bay and Stromness before opting to leave South Georgia waters for the Antarctic Peninsula early.

In the morning, I managed to wreck the shower, curtain, toilet seat, *etc.*, and myself whilst attempting a shower in flat clam conditions..... This seemed to be a routine occurrence, as it was all rapidly repaired (except me).

Although I felt battered and bruised as well as very seized up, I opted to make the walk at Fortuna Bay, which was again enjoyable, if not more of the same.

However, I opted, very sensibly, not to take the option of the Shackleton Hike from Fortuna Bay to Stromness later that afternoon but rather rested up, lunched and generally attempted to recover.

I completed something of a sea-watch from the wet decks (and slipped over again during this) and saw Leith Whaling Station on the way in to Stromness Whaling Station.

I opted to go ashore despite the weather and was glad I did, as I not only met Gary and Chris as they completed the Shackleton Hike, but also had my best views of South Georgia Pipit and Chinstrap Penguins.

Gary and I later struggled to follow the Burnley v. Fleetwood Town FA Cup game on the BBC website, which Burnley eventually won 1.0.

On leaving Stromness the views of Leith Whaling Station and the scenery in general were spectacular.

That evening, the Captain announced a change of plan..... This involved leaving South Georgia early to enable us to avoid a weather system that was worth missing...

Birds seen were South Georgia Pintail, Kelp Gull, Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua, King Penguin, Gentoo Penguin, Chinstrap Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Northern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Prion, White-chinned Petrel, South Georgian Diving-Petrel, South Georgia Shag and South Georgia Pipit.

Besides the birds we obviously again saw Antarctic Fur-seals.

### **Day 13 – Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March**

All day at sea on the MS Fram.

This was our first day at sea crossing from South Georgia to, as it turned out, Elephant Island (coincidental to the request made by Gary and Chris to Jane, the English Archaeological / Historical Leader that she ask the Captain whether he could arrange for us to Elephant Island).

It proved to be a long day with little to differentiate it from any similar day at sea. We / I attended lectures, sea-watched, *etc.*, and also watched our first real ice-bergs.

That evening we ended up in the bar in a semi-drunken escapade, drinking some Scandinavian hooch at Chris' cue and expense.

Birds seen were King Penguin, Macaroni Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, Wandering Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Northern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Prion, White-chinned Petrel, Common Diving-Petrel.

### **Day 13 – Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

All day at sea on the MS Fram.

Our second day at sea between South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula was much like the first, and so involved attending lectures, sea-watching, *etc.*

Birds seen were Chinstrap Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, Southern Royal Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Antarctic Prion, Soft-plumaged Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and South Georgia Diving-Petrel?

Sea-watching also produced Arnoux's Beaked Whale and Blue Whale.

### **Day 14 – Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March**

All day at sea on the MS Fram.

Our third day at sea between South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula was superb, and involved approaching Elephant Island and Clarence Island distantly and then closely.

Fantastically, at lunch, we were positioned just off Point Wild where Shackleton's crew survived for 4½ months before being rescued whilst concurrently trying to follow the 0.0 Blackpool v. Burnley no score-bore on Sky Sports News and the BBC Sport website.

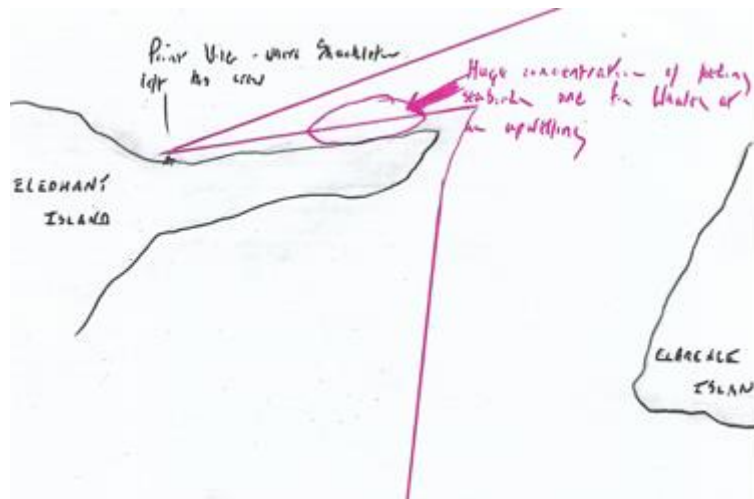
Afterwards the MS Fram encountered a huge raft of feeding seabirds and Fin Whales through which we passed at very low speed, getting good views of the whales (see Figure 2).

This was a very definite highlight of the voyage to date.

In addition, we attended some good lectures.

Birds seen were Snowy Sheathbill, Kelp Gull, Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua, King Penguin, Adelie Penguin, Chinstrap Penguin, Gentoo Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Fulmar, Cape Petrel, Antarctic Prion, Soft-plumaged Petrel, White-chinned Petrel and Antarctic Shag,

In addition, we saw Antarctic Fur-seals and Fin Whales!



**Figure 2, The setting where the large concentration of Fin Whales was seen**

### **Day 15 – Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March**

The day involved being off the Antarctic Peninsula and islands and visiting both Tay Head on Joinville Island and Hope Bay on the peninsula itself.

Seeing Elephant Island was incredible, but the following day we landed for the first (and arguably the best) time on the Antarctic Peninsula itself.

Joinville Island is at the very tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, and as such, is the closest part of the peninsula to Elephant Island. So it was that we were stationed off Tay Head on Joinville Island, at on the southern coast of the island, in a fantastic never-ending sea- and land-landscape of multivarious icebergs in a flat calm sea and snow and ice shrouded low islands with bare ground margins around the warmer coastlines.

Group 3, Adelie Penguin, were in the advance landing party, the first ‘punters’ to make it ashore after the leaders had gone ashore to flag out our routes and be in place along them.

It was an early start then, but an absolute privilege to experience this magical place with minimal ‘company’. Sure, there were the leaders, and members of our landing party, but there wasn’t anything like the numbers ashore if we had been the last group of our ‘half’ of the people going ashore -which could be close to 100.

Once ashore, I made my way quickly to Rudolph, the Chilean Ecological Leader, who was stationed at a location from which an Adelie Penguin and a Weddell Seal could be seen close by in the snowy wastes. I obviously took these in before deciding where to go next. From here, the obvious place to go was beyond up to a viewpoint overlooking the sea-scape beyond, within which the MS Fram was viewable.

However, I opted to walk instead towards the distant Kevin, the American Photographic Leader, who was stationed a few hundred metres away across the gently undulating snowy and bare ground wastes at a location from which, it emerged, several squabbling Southern Elephant Seal.

This proved to be an inspired decision, as it provided me with one of my highlights of the entire expedition.

Hard to explain, but effectively (as I was – just – ahead of anyone else) I was able to, for just about the only time, experience the ‘full’ imperious isolation and desolation of the Antarctic environment. Magnificent. Hard to explain, as I say but a real moment for me.

Once I arrived with Kevin, I took in the battling elephant seals before being joined by Gary who enjoyed the spectacle (if not the filth-stained snow that resulted) even more than me.

I opted then to walk back to the viewpoint where Jane, the English Archaeological / Historical Leader, was stationed. Here I enjoyed the sea-scape views of icebergs, *etc.*, and struggled somewhat walking (balancing) in the snowy and rocky terrain.

From there I returned to the beach where I enjoyed another Adelie Penguin.

Once back on the MS Fram, I was able to watch Humpback Whales amongst the icebergs from the ship.

Later, once the Tay Head landings were over, we sailed through the incomprehensibly fantastic scenery during the middle part of the day. I just couldn't do justice to it.

Sea-watching produced definitive views of a South Polar Skua but the hoped for Snow Petrel eluded me.

In-between times we found time to take in what proved to be a bizarrely dire lecture purporting about Antarctic conspiracy theories. Don't ask.

We sailed to Hope Bay on the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula itself, and scene of a mini-Falklands War-type incident in 1952.

As we had been first ashore earlier in the day, so we were last into the Zodiacs later in the day. We didn't land at Hope Bay, but rather viewed an Adelie Penguin colony from the sea, and in doing so saw both Weddell Seal nearby and a Leopard Seal in the sea, sometimes close to the Zodiac.

We seemed to be out for a long time trying to get views of the Leopard Seal and we got cold and wet in the process, but all good.

Birds seen were Snowy Sheathbill, Kelp Gull, South Polar Skua, Brown Skua, King Penguin, Adelie Penguin, Gentoo Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Fulmar, Cape Petrel, Antarctic Prion and Antarctic Shag.

A bird seen I didn't see was Snow Petrel....

In addition to the birds seen, I also saw Humpback Whales, Antarctic Fur-seals, Weddell Seals, Southern Elephant Seals and Leopard Seals.

### **Day 16 – Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March**

Our second day in Antarctica involved landing on two more islands, these being one of the Aitcho Islands and Deception Island in the South Shetland Islands to the north-west of the peninsula.

The island in the Aitcho Islands complex involved more penguin colonies in icy, snowy, rocky wastes, but was enjoyable, involving a relatively short walk up onto a ridge between two stretches of coast.

Deception Island was different.

Further south and more isolated but in the same island chain, the island is the caldera of an active volcano, which seriously damaged scientific stations in 1967 and 1969 leading the UK one to be abandoned. Previously there was a whaling station there too, and now there are Argentinian and Spanish research stations.

The appearance of the landscape was almost alien – like a slagheap complete with ruined buildings. Not very enticing. Certainly, some people hated it, and / or felt cheated (Gary) as it wasn't very Antarctic (snow and ice being almost completely absent). Wildlife was largely limited to Antarctic Fur-seals. Interestingly, other (non-MS Fram) people were visible before we landed. Once we had, we walked along the shore of the inner coastline of the caldera (variously 'dealing with' the inquisitive (aggressive) fur-seals and then up to Neptune's Window to view the open sea beyond from a natural geo in the cliffs.

We returned the same way, and in doing so passed the fools doing the 'Antarctic Challenge' – the equivalent of plunging into a shallow pool on the edge of a slag-heap near some derelict buildings.

Having said that, our walk beyond took us out to various other derelict buildings and back. Hummm.

Birds seen were Snowy Sheathbill, Kelp Gull, Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua, Adelie Penguin, Gentoo Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-browed Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Fulmar and Antarctic Shag.

In addition, we saw Antarctic Fur-seals.

### **Day 17 – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March**

Day three in Antarctica involved a further three 'visits' to locations on or off the Antarctic Peninsula, namely Culverville Island, Neko Harbour and Leith Cove.

The first of these visits was to another Gentoo Penguin colony on Cuverville Island which wasn't necessarily 'up' there in relation to some of the other landings being only really memorable for the rather disgusting green algae on the icy slush. Perhaps I'm being harsh. I need to look at the photographs, but there always has to be at least favourite places I suppose, and there was a lot of competition in terms of highlights.

Conversely, on leaving Cuverville Island, we again sailed through incredible scenery variously seeing a white cruise ship, Humpback Whales, Antarctic Terns and icebergs (including close ones from the cabin) on our way to our next destination, Neko Harbour.

On approaching, we could see another Hurtigruten ship, the MS Roald Amundsen.

The stop involved visiting another Gentoo Penguin colony walking on routes which may, or may not have been penguin routes, but also involved seeing (and hearing!) calving icebergs and feeding Humpback Whales which, once Gary and I were back onboard the MS Fram involved seeing them feeding under the MS Fram, and us moving quickly from one side of the 'common room' / Science Room area to the other as they did so.

The finally 'stop' involved the MS Fram being stationed off Leith Cove (and various survey stations) in the fantastic scenery of the sea channel between Doumer Island and Wiencke Island whilst 'enjoying' an on-deck barbeque. It was fun, but freezing, and as good as the barbeque food and drink were, we didn't stay on deck very long! Actually, Leith Cove was a destination – a landing – for those 'wild camping' overnight in Antarctica, but that didn't include me and Gary. Far too sensible (and far too expensive!).

That evening proved memorable for us for different reasons, as Gary, Chris and I resorted to playing a game of Monopoly with a Norwegian Monopoly set which necessitated the use of one mobile as a proxy dice and another to interpret Community Chest card from Norwegian to English.....

Birds seen were Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua, Gentoo Penguin, Chinstrap Penguin, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Fulmar and Antarctic Shag.

In addition, I saw Humpback Whale, Antarctic Fur-seal.

### **Day 18 – Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March**

The following morning, we were sailing towards our most southerly destination of all, Hidden Bay, at (just) 65°S (Shetland being c.60°N) on the Antarctic peninsula.

This was a memorable Antarctica finale involving boarding the Zodiacs and cruising into and around Hidden Bay amongst spectacular icebergs (one with a Crab-eating Seal sat atop it) all whilst ogling Una's Tits (it's a long story, involving the naming of twin peaks after the Falkland Islands Governor-General's Private Secretary, as opposed to her magnificent breasts, but then bawdy nautical types got involved.....).

On departing, we began our crossing of the Drake Passage, during which eating and drinking in the restaurant and attending lectures in the common room area became interesting due to the swell.

Birds seen were Kelp Gull, Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Fulmar and Antarctic Shag.

In addition, I saw Crab-eating Seal.

### **Day 19 – Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March**

This day involved continuing sailing through the Drake Passage. The morning sea-watch produced some good birds, most notably a couple of Kergulean Petrels.

During the afternoon Gary, Chris and I joined Jane's Scientific Illustration class, being encouraged to use stippling. I attempted this, but instead, reverted to drawing and King Penguin's skull exactly life-size using my normal technique.....

And in the evening Gary, Chris and I were second in James' quiz about the expedition cruise.

Birds seen were Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, Black-browed Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Kergulean Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Sooty Shearwater, Great Shearwater and Common Diving-Petrel.

## Day 20 – Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March

The earlier part of the day again involved sailing across the Drake Passage, which was a rough-ish passage but still allowed some sea-watching. The later part of the day involved sailing into the Beagle Channel.

We slowed right down as the complicated tip of South America came into view; we were not far off Cape Horn, but not close enough, unfortunately.

And as dusk approached and passed we were stationary off Puerto William whilst the Chilean authorities were undertaking mandatory checks and the Chilean pilot was getting onboard.

Birds seen were Kelp Gull, South American Tern, Chilean Skua, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, Wandering Albatross, Southern Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Magellanic Diving-Petrel and Common Diving-Petrel.

## Day 21 - Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March

The next day it became apparent why we needed a specialist pilot, as we were sailing through the very impressive and incredibly convoluted Beagle Channel, which involved fjords, islands, and never-ending distant vistas of mountains and glaciers.

The entire southern tip of South America appeared to be an unspoilt wilderness, with little or no signs of human activity. Tangled, distorted *nothofagus* forests coated the lower parts of the landscape, including the islands.

Sea-watching continued to be good, with Magellanic Diving-petrel, and a distant but massively impressive Andean Condor and (Hourglass) Dolphin all seen.

Again, there were very few other vessels, and it was an incredible navigation, all the more so having spoken to the Chilean pilot over lunch.

Burnley beating Wigan Athletic 3.0 was another highlight. Maybe farewell drinks with the Captain and crew, *etc.*, was too.

Packing and putting out our big bags out for collection may not have been.

Birds seen were Kelp Goose, Kelp Gull, South American Tern, Chilean Skua, Magellanic Penguin, Black-browed Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Sooty Shearwater, Magellanic Diving-Petrel, Magellanic Cormorant, Imperial Cormorant and Andean Condor.

Other birds seen, but not by me, included both Crested Caracara and Striated Caracara.

Mammals seen involved Hourglass Dolphin.

## Day 22 – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March

Our final day with Hurtigruten involved arriving back in Punta Arenas, disembarking from the MS Fram for the final time and again looking around Puntas Arenas, before then going to the airport and taking an internal flight back to Santiago, where we tried and failed to go to the biggest derby in Chilean football, in stark contrast with the preceding three weeks.....

The following morning, we were back in Punta Arenas. We finishing packing and left Cabin 611 for the last time. We had an early breakfast, before we disembarked and conveyed our good-byes to the leaders, *etc.* We then boarded a ridiculous coach convoy, involving going through baggage check and re-boarding buses all within 100 or 200 metres of the MS Fram.

Ridiculously, we then visited the viewpoint again, and then, more sensibly, stopped on the promenade in Punta Arenas which enabled us to take in various monuments, including one which commemorated the Chilean sea captain who had finally rescued Shackleton's crew from their horrendous 'camp' on Elephant Island.

Eventually, we journeyed the short distance to the airport and eventually boarded the flight, still being chaperoned by Hurtigruten staffers and seeing that various MS Fram crew and leaders were also involved as passengers.

We landed after a three-hour flight, collected baggage, and opted to say our very few selected goodbyes solely to Chris and the two Watford brothers.

We quickly organised an Uber taxi to the AirBnB apartment where we dumped our bags.



Then we attempted to organise another Uber to the football stadium to take in the bonus biggest derby in Chilean football, but eventually conceded defeat and opted to watch it in a sports bar in Bellavista with the help of the very helpful concierge.

We travelled there in another Uber, and heard a huge shout as we arrived; this turned out to be the best chance of an entirely turgid game.

We watched it in what proved to be a quirky, edgy sports bar until the coverage there failed and then we watched the second half in a plaza eatery, where we ordered way too much and I left half of it.

Stuffed, I really struggled to walk home.

Birds seen were Coscoroba Swan, Upland Goose, Kelp Goose, Ruddy-headed Goose, Crested Duck, Feral Pigeon, Eared Dove, Brown-hooded Gull, Dolphin Gull, South American Tern, Chilean Skua, Northern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Cormorant and Imperial Cormorant.

## **Day 23 – Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March**

### **Santiago – exploring / being a tourist in Santiago**

After the luxury of the MS Fram, all you can eat meals of real quality and variety, it was back to reality in our AirBnB. So, having emerged and suffered a bad coffee sourced from a nearby shop by Gary, we ended up going in search of a better coffee and in doing so wandering into city centre – the Mercado / Railway Station area and back.

In doing so we ended up finding a suitable place for breakfast, where we enjoyed cafe con leche times two, a mini-croissant, tostadas and a gorgeous, pneumatically enhanced waitress at the Café Rex.

We were also successful in finally finding a Tourist Information Centre and getting a city centre tourist map and good information regarding the airport bus as well as purchasing chargers suitable for Chilean power sockets from a street vendor, *etc.*

After returning to the Airbnb and having lunch at some nearby courtyard cafes we later once more ventured out and attempted to enjoy a Parque O'Higgins, which was quite a yomp, but it was closing (ridiculously early) as we arrived. Therefore, we continued our major yomp back to the city centre. We stopped for a couple of fresh juices in student-dominated area and later enjoyed a few city centre beers, but not at certain incredibly-staffed café con piernas-type bars. We ate at an Italian type (in terms of food anyway) place which somehow reminded me of the good restaurant we ate at in Budapest on our lad's weekend there.

Birds seen included Feral Pigeon, Eared Dove, probable Variable Hawk, Monk Parakeet, Austral Thrush and House Sparrow.

## **Day 24 – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March**

### **Santiago – getting Uber to the airport – catching flight from Santiago to London Heathrow**

I can only suppose that our who leaving the AirBnB taking a taxi to the airport, checking in and going through security, boarding our BA flight from Santiago to London Heathrow went well, or at least as well as could have been expected, and as such, there was very little to say. In all honesty, I don't recollect very much about the flight. I don't remember seeing Gary during the flight for instance; we weren't sat together. Presumably I got some sleep but who knows..... .

No birds recorded as seen although undoubtedly Feral Pigeon, *etc.*, would be seen en-route to the airport.

## **Day 25 – Monday**

### **15<sup>th</sup> March – London – catching flight from London Heathrow to Edinburgh**

Similarly, although I do remember being with Gary as we went through Customs, *etc.*, we soon went our own separate ways, me going to wherever it was that I was getting my London Heathrow to Edinburgh flight from, and Gary going off to 'reverse-commute' to St. Albans. Again, beyond that, nothing to report, clearly.

## Annotated species checklist

1. **Coscoroba Swan** *Coscoroba coscoroba* A few were seen on pools visible from the road on the drive into Punta Arenas from the airport and vice versa on both the 19<sup>th</sup> February and the 12<sup>th</sup> March.
2. **Falkland Steamer Duck** *Tachyeres brachypterus* Whilst we were in the Falkland Islands this wacky endemic duck species was seen on New Island and Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, on West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and in Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
3. **Upland Goose** *Chloephaga picta* This goose was seen on New Island and Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and in Punta Arenas on the 12<sup>th</sup> March.
4. **Kelp Goose** *Chloephaga hybrida* Kelp Goose was seen on New Island and Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February, in the Beagle Channel on the 11<sup>th</sup> March and in Punta Arenas on the 12<sup>th</sup> March.
5. **Ruddy-headed Goose** *Chloephaga rubidiceps* Although less common than Upland Goose and Kelp Goose, this goose was seen on New Island and Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and in Punta Arenas on the 12<sup>th</sup> March.
6. **Crested Duck** *Lophonetta specularioides* Crested Duck was seen on New Island and Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
7. **Yellow-billed or South Georgia Pintail** *Anas georgica* This South Georgia endemic (or semi-endemic!) was seen at the Salisbury Plain King Penguin colony on the 27<sup>th</sup> February, in Grytviken on the 28<sup>th</sup> February and at Fortuna Bay and Stromness on the 1<sup>st</sup> March.
8. **Yellow-billed or Speckled Teal** *Anas flavirostris* This species was seen in Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
9. **Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia* predictably seen once we returned to the 'civilisation' of Punta Arenas and Santiago on both the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March (and subsequently).
10. **Eared Dove** *Zenaida auriculata* A few seen once we were back in Santiago on both the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March.
11. **Chilean Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus chilensis* A few were seen on pools visible from the road on the drive into Punta Arenas from the airport on the 19<sup>th</sup> February.
12. **Snowy Sheathbill** *Chionis albus* This archetypal Antarctic bird was seen first seen at Right Whale Bay on South Georgia on the 26<sup>th</sup> February. It was also seen at Hercules Bay on South Georgia on the 28<sup>th</sup> February, Wild Point on Elephant Island on the 4<sup>th</sup> March, Tay Head on Joinville Island and Hope Bay (and on the MS Fram) on the 5<sup>th</sup> March and Aitcho Island on the 6<sup>th</sup> March.
13. **Magellanic Oystercatcher** *Haematopus leucopodus* This oystercatcher species was seen in the Falkland Islands: on Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and in Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
14. **Blackish Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ater* This oystercatcher species was seen in the Falkland Islands: on Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, West Point Island and Saunders Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and in Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
15. **Southern Lapwing** *Vanellus chilensis* One or two were seen on the drive between the airport and the town on arrival in Punta Arenas on the 19<sup>th</sup> February.
16. **Brown-hooded Gull** *Chroicocephalus maculipennis* Brown-headed Gull was seen in Punta Arenas on the 19<sup>th</sup> February and 12<sup>th</sup> March and also in the Western Falkland Islands on the 21<sup>st</sup> February.
17. **Dolphin Gull** *Leucophaeus scoresbii* Dolphin Gull was seen in Punta Arenas on the 19<sup>th</sup> February and 12<sup>th</sup> March and also in the Western Falkland Islands on the 21<sup>st</sup> February and in Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
18. **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus* The most ubiquitous gull species; seen on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> February and on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March.
19. **South American Tern** *Sterna hirundinacea* This species was seen on or near the coastline of the Falklands on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup> February, and southern Chile on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> March.
20. **Antarctic Tern** *Sterna vittata* This species was seen on the coastline of South Georgia on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> March, and of the Antarctic Peninsula on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> March.
21. **Chilean Skua** *Stercorarius chilensis* Rather predictably, it was this species of *Stercorarius* skua we saw when we were in Chilean waters on the 19<sup>th</sup> February and the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March.
22. **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius chilensis* One was very well seen from the MS Fram when we were sailing between Tay Head on Joinville Island and Hope Bay on the Antarctic Peninsula on the 5<sup>th</sup> March.
23. **Brown Skua** *Stercorarius chilensis* This skua species was the most frequently seen – it was seen on all dates between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February and on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> March and as such both whilst we were on land in the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula and also whilst we were at sea.
24. **King Penguin** *Aptenodytes patagonicus* This species was first seen at the small colony of King Penguins on Saunders Island in the Falkland Islands on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. It was also seen as we crossed between the Falkland Islands and South Georgia on the 25<sup>th</sup> February. However, these birds were just percussors for the visits to increasingly large colonies on South Georgia at Right Whale Bay, Salisbury Plain and Fortuna Bay on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup> March respectively. In addition, was also seen on the 28<sup>th</sup> February and on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> March.
25. **Adelie Penguin** *Pygoscelis adeliae* Although this species was first seen on Elephant Island on the 4<sup>th</sup> March, it was first seen properly at Tay Head on Joinville Island when one or two were seen on the 5<sup>th</sup> March.

Subsequently, we also viewed a colony in Hope Bay on the Antarctic Peninsula on the 5<sup>th</sup> March. This species was also seen on the 6<sup>th</sup> March.

26. **Chinstrap Penguin** *Pygoscelis antarcticus* Our first involved a lone individual walking through the outskirts of the Salisbury Plain King Penguin colony on the 27<sup>th</sup> February, whilst another was seen near the Stromness Whaling Station on the 1<sup>st</sup> March. This species was also seen when we were at sea between South Georgia and Antarctica on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March and also elsewhere in the Antarctic Peninsula on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March.
27. **Gentoo Penguin** *Pygoscelis papua* As well as birds we saw in colonies in the Falkland Islands on Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, Saunders Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, South Georgia in Right Whale Bay on the 26<sup>th</sup> February, at Hercules Bay on the 28<sup>th</sup> February, Fortuna Bay on the 1<sup>st</sup> March, Point Wild on Elephant Island on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March, Tay Head on Joinville Island and Hope Bay on the 5<sup>th</sup> March, Aitcho Islands and Deception Island on the 6<sup>th</sup> March and Cuverville Island and Neko Harbour on the 7<sup>th</sup> March.
28. **Magellanic Penguin** *Spheniscus magellanicus* Having seen birds at sea between Chile and the Falklands on the 20<sup>th</sup> February, birds were seen on Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, and on both West Point and Saunders Islands on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, before birds were seen in the Beagle Channel on the 11<sup>th</sup> March.
29. **Southern Rockhopper Penguin** *Eudyptes chrysocome* In addition to the birds we saw in colonies on New Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, West Point and Saunders Islands on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February we saw birds at seas from the MS Fram on the 24<sup>th</sup> February.
30. **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Predictably this storm-petrel species was seen everyday between the 24<sup>th</sup> February and the 10<sup>th</sup> March. It was by far the commonest storm-petrel, and was seen both at sea from the MS Fram and also flying over the sea (memorably amongst icebergs) from Zodiacs and when on land (presumably flying to nesting colonies during visits to sites in South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula.
31. **Grey-backed Storm-Petrel** *Garrodia nereis* At least one was seen from the MS Fram as we sailed between the Falkland Islands and South Georgia on the 24<sup>th</sup> February.
32. **Black-bellied Storm-Petrel** *Fregetta tropica* A few individuals of this superb *Fregetta* were seen between the Falklands and South Georgia on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February, between South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March and between the Antarctic Peninsula and Chile on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March.
33. **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* Ignoring potential splits (Snowy, etc.) this species was the most frequently seen of the large albatrosses. A few individuals were seen between the Falklands and South Georgia on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February, off South Georgia on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February, between South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March and between the Antarctic Peninsula and Chile on the 10<sup>th</sup> March.
34. **Southern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea epomophora* A probable was seen from the foredeck of the MS Fram between Chile and the Falklands on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, and one or two(?) were seen as we sailed between the Falkland Islands and South Georgia on the 24<sup>th</sup> February, between South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March and between the Antarctic Peninsula and Chile on the 10<sup>th</sup> March.
35. **Northern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea sanfordi* A probable was seen from the foredeck of the MS Fram between Chile and the Falklands on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, and one or two(?) were seen as we sailed between the Falkland Islands and South Georgia on the 24<sup>th</sup> February.
36. **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria fusca* A few joined a small number of Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses following the MS Fram as we sailed between the Falkland Islands and South Georgia on the 24<sup>th</sup> February.
37. **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria palpebrata* Small numbers of this superb albatross was seen on each of the 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February and the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March.
38. **Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris* Definitely the commonest albatross species; seen on all but one day whilst we were on the MS Fram.
39. **Grey-headed Albatross** *Thalassarche chrysostoma* A few of this lovely albatross was seen from the MS Fram on each of the 26<sup>th</sup> February and the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March.
40. **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* Seen on each of the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March.
41. **Northern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes halli* Seen on each of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> March.
42. **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* A few of this enigmatic Antarctic equivalent of Northern Fulmar were seen each day we were off the Antarctic Peninsula between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> March.
43. **Cape Petrel** *Daption capense* Small numbers of this joyful species were seen from the MS Fram on each of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March, including a few viewable from the restaurant during one of our meals on the 3<sup>rd</sup>(?) March.
44. **Antarctic Prion** *Pachyptila desolata* This prion species was the one we were considered to be seeing once we were approaching South Georgia and beyond; seen every day between the 25<sup>th</sup> February and the 5<sup>th</sup> March.
45. **Slender-billed Prion** *Pachyptila belcheri* This prion species was seen on our first day at sea between Chile and the Falkland Islands on the 20<sup>th</sup> February, and again on our first day at sea between the Falkland Islands and South Georgia on the 24<sup>th</sup> February.
46. **Kerguelen Petrel** *Aphrodroma brevirostris* Two or three individuals of this stonking petrel were seen as we crossed the Drake Passage on the 9<sup>th</sup> March.
47. **Soft-plumaged Petrel** *Pterodroma mollis* A few of this lovely *Pterodroma* were seen during the sea crossings from the Falklands to South Georgia on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February, between South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March, and between the Antarctic Peninsula and Chile on the 9<sup>th</sup> March.

48. **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea* A few were seen from the MS Fram as we sailed between the Falkland Islands and South Georgia on both the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February.
49. **White-chinned Petrel** *Procellaria aequinoctialis* This species was seen during sea-watches from the decks of the MS Fram on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March.
50. **Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna grisea* A few of this species were seen from the MS Fram on each of the 20<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> February and the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March.
51. **Great Shearwater** *Ardenna gravis* Great Shearwaters were seen from the MS Fram generally in waters which were more northerly, i.e., on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> February and the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March.
52. **Magellanic Diving-Petrel** *Pelecanoides magellani* Understandably, it was considered to be this diving-petrel we were seeing in the Beagle Channel on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March.
53. **South Georgian Diving-Petrel** *Pelecanoides georgicus* Likewise, those diving-petrels we saw when in South Georgia were understandably considered to be this species. Seen on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup> and possibly the 3<sup>rd</sup> March,
54. **Common Diving-Petrel** *Pelecanoides urinatrix* Individuals which were considered to be this diving-petrel species were seen from the MS Fram on the 20<sup>th</sup> February and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March.
55. **Rock Shag / Magellanic Cormorant** *Leucocarbo magellanicus* this shag or cormorant species was seen in both Chile and the Falklands; on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February and the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March.
56. **Imperial Cormorant** *Leucocarbo atriceps* As with the latter species, this cormorant species was seen in both Chile and the Falklands; on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February and the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March.
57. **South Georgia Shag** *Leucocarbo georgianus* Somewhat predictably, it was this shag species we saw everyday whilst in the South Georgia between the 26<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup> March.
58. **Antarctic Shag** *Leucocarbo bransfieldensis* Somewhat predictably, it was this shag species we saw everyday whilst in the Antarctic between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> March.
59. **Black-faced Ibis** *Theristicus melanopis* A few were seen feeding on the central reservation of the road into Punta Arenas from the airport on the 19<sup>th</sup> February.
60. **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* A few were seen in the Falklands on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
61. **Andean Condor** *Vultur gryphus* As a result of some intensive scanning I was able to pick up on one as we sailed through the Beagle Channel on the 11<sup>th</sup> March (and, fantastically, I was able to get the older of the two brothers on it despite him just having a pair of compact binoculars).
62. **Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura* A few seen on each of New, Carcass, West Point and Saunders Islands and in Port Stanley on each of the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
63. **Variable / Red-backed Hawk** *Geranoaetus polyosoma* What was probably this species was seen on New Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February and in O'Higgins Park, Santiago on the 13<sup>th</sup> March.
64. **Striated Caracara** *Phalacrocorax australis* This characterful scavenger was seen on New and Carcass Islands on the 21<sup>st</sup> and West Point and Saunders Islands on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.
65. **Monk Parakeet** *Myiopsitta monachus* A few were seen and heard in O'Higgins Park, Santiago on the 13<sup>th</sup> March.
66. **Blackish Cinclodes** *Cinclodes antarcticus* Seen on New and Carcass Islands on the 21<sup>st</sup> and West Point and Saunders Islands on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.
67. **Dark-faced Ground Tyrant** *Muscisaxicola maclovianus* Seen on each of New, Carcass, West Point and Saunders Islands and in Port Stanley on each of the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
68. **Grass / Sedge Wren** *Cistothorus platensis* One or two were seen on Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February and on West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.
69. **Cobb's Wren** *Troglodytes cobbi* At least two individuals of this Falkland Islands endemic were seen on Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February.
70. **Austral Thrush** *Turdus falcklandii* One or two were seen and also in Santiago on both the 18<sup>th</sup> February and the 13<sup>th</sup> March. A few were seen in the Falklands too, on both New and Carcass Islands on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, on West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.
71. **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* Seen in Punta Arenas on the 19<sup>th</sup> February, in Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and also in Santiago on the 13<sup>th</sup> March.
72. **Correndera Pipit** *Anthus correndera* A few were seen, but not very well, on West Point Island in the Falkland Islands on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.
73. **South Georgia Pipit** *Anthus antarcticus* This South Georgia endemic passerine was seen on each day on South Georgia – the 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup> March.
74. **Black-chinned Siskin** *Spinus barbatus* A few were seen on each of New, Carcass and West Point Islands in the Falkland Islands on both the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> February.
75. **Long-tailed Meadowlark** *Sturnella loyca* This species was seen on both New and Carcass Islands in the Falkland Islands on the 21<sup>st</sup> February.
76. **White-bridled / Black-throated Finch** *Melanodera melanodera* I managed to see a couple of these when on Carcass Island in the Falklands Islands on the 21<sup>st</sup> February.

## **Other non-bird species**

In addition to birds detailed on the checklist I also saw:

Peale's Dolphin – one(?) was seen between Chile and the Falkland Islands on the 20<sup>th</sup> February.

Hourglass Dolphin – one probable was seen in the Beagle Channel on the 11<sup>th</sup> March.

Sei Whale – a good few were seen between New Island and Carcass Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, this species was also seen off West Point Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and off South Georgia on the 26<sup>th</sup> February.

Fin Whale – this species was seen off South Georgia on both the 26<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> February but most memorably and spectacularly we passed through a large congregation of this species of whale between Elephant Island and Clarence Island on the 4<sup>th</sup> March.

Blue Whale – individuals of this species were seen off South Georgia on the 26<sup>th</sup> February and at sea between South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

Humpback Whale – a few were seen off Tay Head on Joinville Island on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March and between Cuverville Island and Neko Harbour and at Neko Harbour itself (where two were watched as they swam under the MS Fram) on the 7<sup>th</sup> March.

Arnoux's Beaked Whale – one was seen at sea between South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March; views were sufficient for species identification after some research.

Southern Elephant Seal – three or so were seen in Grytviken on the 28<sup>th</sup> February and a similar number were seen battling at Tay Head on Joinville Island on the 5<sup>th</sup> March.

Antarctic Fur-seal – first seen from the MS Fram off the West Falkland Island on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, this species was seen in large numbers and close at colonies in South Georgia on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February and the 1<sup>st</sup> March and on the Antarctic Peninsula on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March, as well as being seen from the MS Fram.

Weddell Seal at Tay Head on Joinville Island and at Hope Bay on the Antarctic Peninsula on the 5<sup>th</sup> March.

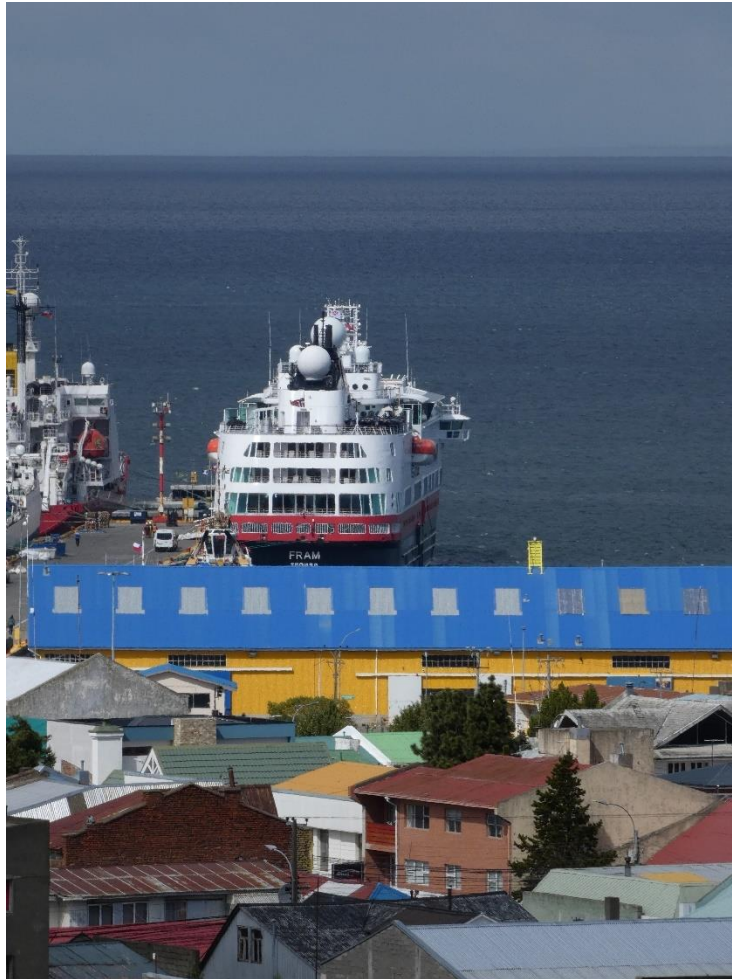
Leopard Seal - one or two were seen at Hope Bay on the Antarctic Peninsula around the Zodiac on the 5<sup>th</sup> March.

Crab-eating Seal – one (the most abundant large mammal in the world seemingly) was seen on an iceberg in Hidden Bay on the Antarctic Peninsula on the 8<sup>th</sup> March.

South American Sealion – one was seen on the seafront in Port Stanley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

**The following photographs are a fairly random selection of the many that I took. However, I have to say that in no way could my images do justice to the incredible spectacles I saw.**



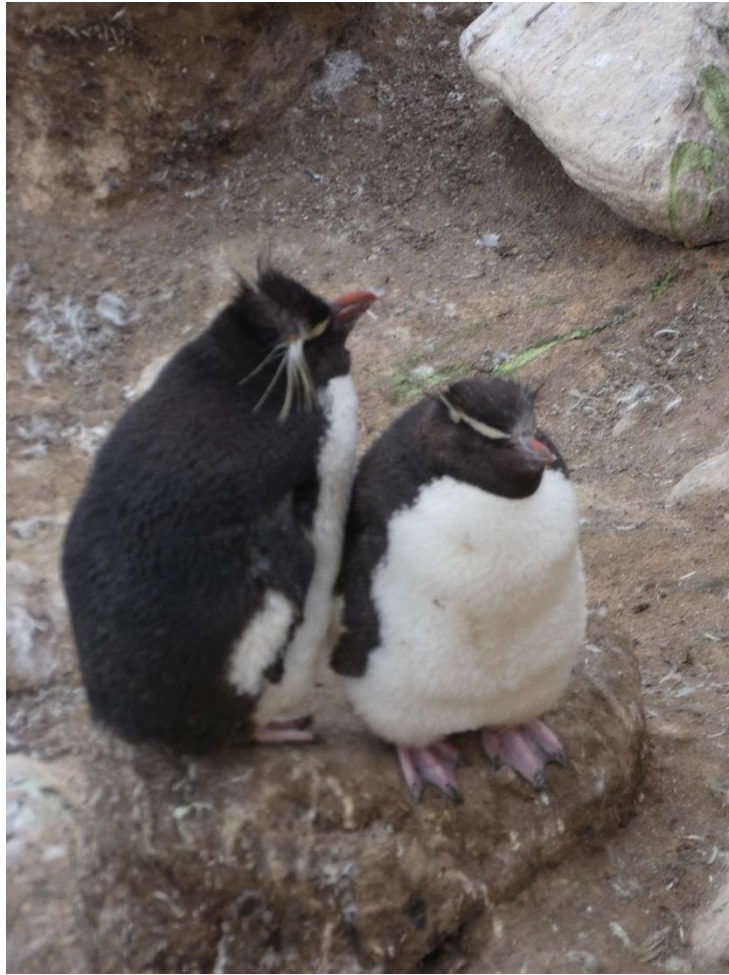


**Plate 1, MS Fram in Punta Arenas harbour, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 2, Dolphin Gull, Punta Arenas sea-front, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2023**



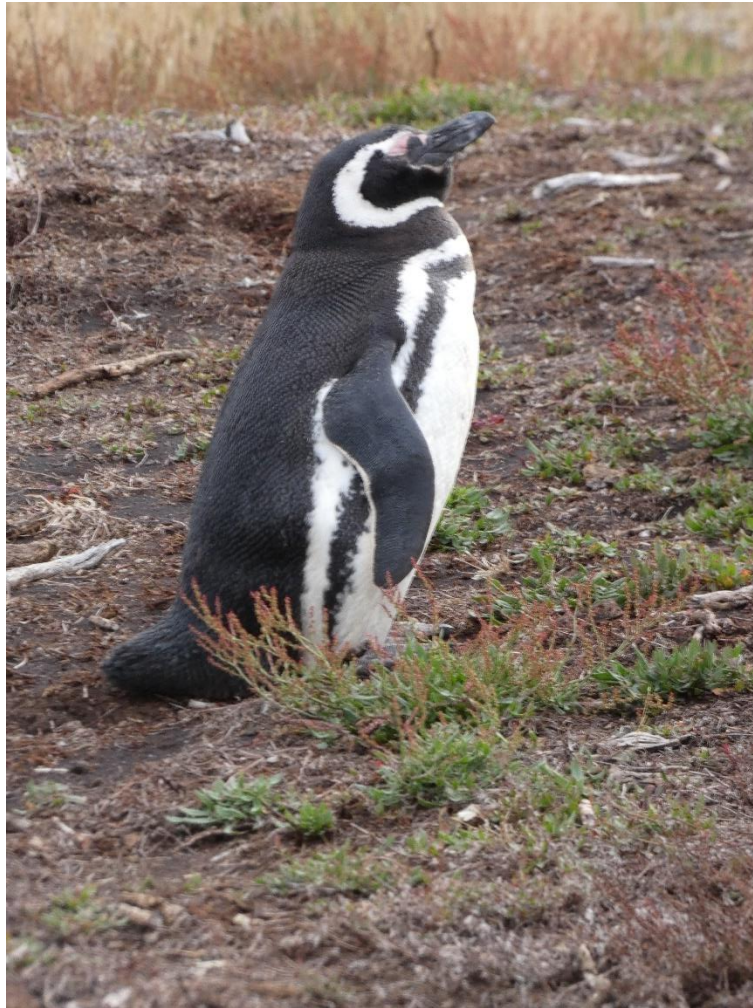


**Plate 3, Southern Rockhopper Penguins, New Island, Falkland Islands, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 4, Carcass Island, Falkland Islands, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023**





**Plate 5, Magallenic Penguin. Carcass Island, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 6, Striated Caracara, West Point Island, Falkland Islands, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023**





**Plate 7, King Penguins, Saunders Island, Falkland Islands, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 8, Brown Skua, Saunders Island, Falkland Islands, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023**





**Plate 9, Southern Giant Petrel, Saunders Island, Falkland Islands, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 10, Falkland Island Steamer Ducks, Saunders Island, Falkland Islands, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023**





**Plate 11, Typical beach scene, at Salisbury Plain, South Georgia, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 12, Macaroni Penguins, Hercules Bay, South Georgia, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023**





**Plate 13, Grytviken from the MS Fram, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 14, Shackleton's Grave, Grytviken, South Georgia, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023**





**Plate 15, South Georgia Pintails, Grytviken, South Georgia, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 16, South Georgia Pipit, Stromness, South Georgia, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023**





**Plate 17, The monument on the shore at Point Wild on Elephant Island commemorating the Chilean captain who rescued Shackleton's men, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023**



**Plate 18, Wandering Albatross, Southern Oceans, February 2023**





**Plate 19, Weddell Seal, Tay Head, Joinville Island, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

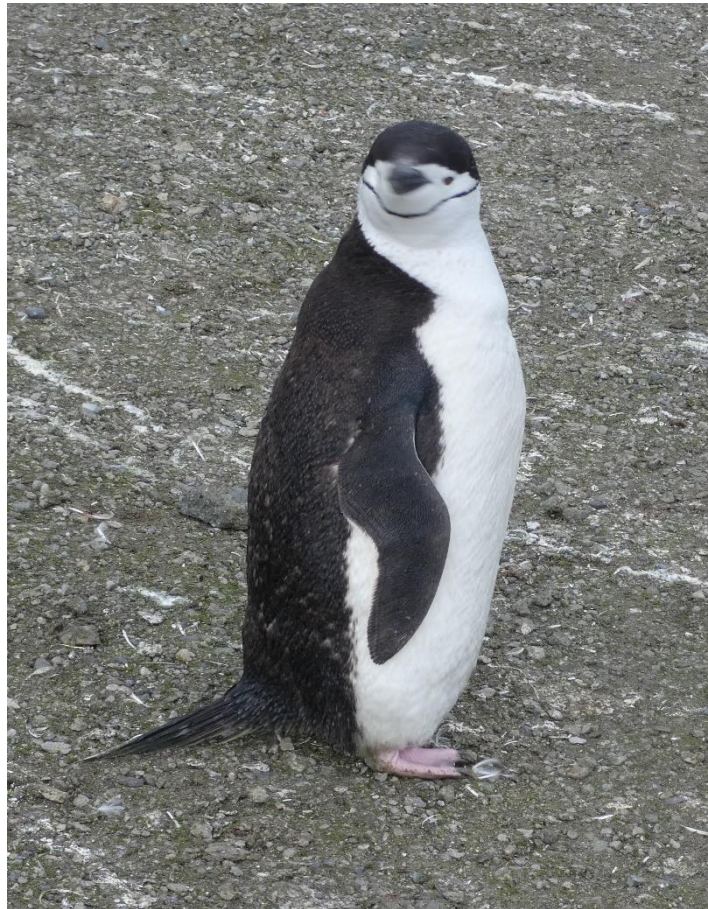


**Plate 20, Southern Elephant Seals, Tay Head, Joinville Island, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2023**





**Plate 21, Tay Head, Joinville Island, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2023**



**Plate 22, Me? Chinstrap Penguin, Aitcho Islands, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023**





**Plate 23, Snowy Sheathbill on the foredeck of the MS Fram on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2023**



**Plate 24, Crab-eating Seal, Hidden Bay, Antarctic Peninsula, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023**



**Plate 25, Incredible scenery in the Beagle Channel, 11th March 2023**