

**ANTARCTICA,
SOUTH GEORGIA
AND
THE FALKLANDS**

DECEMBER 17, 2006 – JANUARY 8, 2007

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TOUR REPORT
ANTARCTICA, SOUTH GEORGIA, AND THE FALKLANDS
December 17, 2006-January 8, 2007

By Brian Patteson

Together with Pete Dunne, I was fortunate to co-lead VENT's trip to Antarctica, South Georgia, and the Falklands in December and January. We had a great group of people, and we began with some pre-cruise birding in Buenos Aires and then Tierra del Fuego prior to boarding the ship. We crossed the infamous Drake Passage in fair weather, and enjoyed some fine seabirding with a good number of Royal, Gray-headed, and Light-mantled albatrosses seen on our way down south.

The weather in Antarctica and the South Shetlands could not have been much better. Though we visited some of the same sites that I had been to on three earlier cruises here, such as Baily Head, Cuverville Island, and the legendary Lemaire Channel, we also went to some places I had not previously visited. These included Sven Foyn Harbor, where we had an excellent morning of zodiac cruising; Penguin Island, where we had the opportunity to peer down into a volcano; Paulet Island, where thousands of Adelie Penguins were nesting and Snow Petrels flocked just offshore; and Devil Island, where we saw a leopard seal snatch an Adelie Penguin from the sea. We also cruised close by the South Orkney Islands, a group of islands not often visited by these trips. There we found a wonderland of huge grounded icebergs and desolate moss-covered islands.

When we first arrived in South Georgia, we got a feeling for how hard the wind could blow; however, by the second day conditions were much improved, and we enjoyed fine landings and zodiac cruises at a number of sites. Gold Harbor was packed full of wildlife and what seemed like a lot of King Penguins. The next day we saw what a lot of King Penguins really looked like when we went to Salisbury Plain. Following that, we were able to land at Prion Islet, where we saw majestic Wandering Albatrosses sharing their nesting grounds with a most improbable inhabitant in this harsh environment—the tiny South Georgia Pipit.

From South Georgia we headed west to the Falkland Islands, where a full day of landings allowed us to sample the abundant wildlife. After having been accustomed to low diversity and high numbers down south, it was refreshing to see considerably more diversity in birdlife again; Upland and Ruddy-headed geese, Imperial Shag, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Rufous-chested Dotterel, Blackish Cinclodes, and Long-tailed Meadowlark were just a few highlights. Of course everyone was thrilled to see the Rockhopper and Magellanic penguins up close, and we also saw the endemic Cobb's Wren.

As usual, the superb crew and expedition staff of the *Clipper Adventurer* helped to make this a cruise to remember. But I will also remember the great group of VENT passengers on this trip, many of whom I hope to bird with again sometime in the future.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.

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Activities Day by Day:

December 17- Late night flight to Buenos Aires for most tour participants.

December 18- Morning arrival in B.A. followed by an optional birding trip to the Reserva Ecologica de Vicente Lopez in Buenos Aires. There we found a good diversity of birds in a short period of time; it was a good introduction to birds of Argentina by our local guides from Seriemas Nature Tours.

December 19- Early morning flight to Ushuaia, Argentina followed by a midday birding trip to Tierra del Fuego National Park. VENT passengers had the option for a special bird-focused trip in the park. Our local guide, Sabrina, gave us an excellent crash course on this area known locally as “Fin del Mundo.” Bird highlights included Ashy-headed Goose, Andean Condor, and White-throated Caracara. Lunch was asada (barbequed meats) and this was followed with a show by local folk dancers. We boarded the Clipper Adventurer late in the afternoon. Heading out the Beagle Channel, many of us birded on deck about as long as the light lasted, but the hoped for Magellanic Diving-Petrel was not seen.

December 20- The infamous Drake Passage was not what many had expected- light winds and slight seas. Nevertheless, pelagic birding was productive, and many Royal Albatross were seen along with dozens of Black-brows and a variety of smaller tubenoses.

December 21- Our second day at sea was also one of benign weather, and it was a good day for Blue Petrel, with dozens seen. During the afternoon we saw several Grey-headed Albatross in addition to the Black-brows, and a nice contingent of Light-mantled Albatross followed the ship for several minutes before dinnertime.

December 22- After two days at sea, everyone was anxious to get ashore. Our first landing was one to remember. We went ashore at Baily Head on Deception Island, where the Chinstrap Penguin rookery is reported to number 200,000 birds. A steady procession of penguin commuters greeted us as we hit the beach, surfing in on the swells aboard the zodiacs. After taking in the sights, sounds, and smells of this enormous assemblage of penguins, over half of the passengers, including most of the VENT group, set off on a challenging hike across a ridge to Whalers Bay, while the ship repositioned

there. Along the way, we gained over 1000 feet of elevation as we struggled across fresh snow and loose volcanic rock. When we arrived at the other side, nesting Cape Petrels covered the cliffs at Neptune's Window, and curious young Brown Skuas loitered on the beach at Whaler's Bay. After lunch there was an opportunity to wallow in the geothermally heated water at Pendulum Cove before we headed out to sea en route the Antarctic Peninsula.

December 23- We began the day with another early morning landing, this time at Cuverville Island, which has the largest colony of Gentoo Penguins on the Antarctic Peninsula. There were also plenty of skuas; both Brown and South Polar Skuas were nesting on the island and patrolling the penguin rookery. It was an excellent opportunity to compare the two species.

Later in the morning we visited Gabriel Gonzalez Videla station, a Chilean research base, where the personnel opened their small gift store and museum for us. This was the site of Waterboat Point, where some would be Antarctic explorers, Bagshawe and Lester, carried out studies on weather and penguins after their expedition fell apart in 1921. The main avian inhabitants were Gentoo Penguins and Snowy Sheathbills. A leucistic Gentoo put in a brief appearance for our first landing party.

During the afternoon, we enjoyed balmy weather on a zodiac cruise around Paradise Bay, where we saw nesting Antarctic Shags and cruised through the ice, which was calved from the glacier there. From there we headed to the Lemaire Channel, where we found a large group of Killer Whales. These appeared to be the "Type B" stock of Orcas, which are ice specialists and are currently being studied to see if they might be a distinct species or subspecies. The scenery along the Lemaire was spectacular, reminding us why it came to be known as "Kodak Gap." We had plans to visit Petermann Island after dinner, but thick ice at the end of the channel prevented us from doing that.

December 24- We began a bit later this morning, not with a landing, but instead with a long zodiac cruise around lots of big, grounded icebergs, abundant seals, and islands populated with nesting Kelp Gulls and Antarctic Terns. The site of our explorations was Sven Foyn Harbor, named for a ship, which was named for the inventor of the whaling harpoon gun. This was a site of whaling in the early 1900's. We actually got to see one of the old factory ships, the Guvernoren, which had caught fire with a load of whale oil in 1915 and been run aground by the whalers so as to salvage equipment, and provide storage. The target species of the whalers, Humpbacks, are sometimes seen here in small numbers, but were not present on this morning.

After lunch we made a "continental landing" at Portal Point. Except for a couple of Weddell Seals on the shore and the occasional Gentoo Penguin, there wasn't much wildlife here. It was warm and the snow was melting rapidly, but a few of us nevertheless improvised a sled run down the hill with the materials we had at hand, while others took a moment alone to savor the scenery and perhaps contemplate the remoteness of it all. Later in the afternoon, we did find some Humpback Whales and enjoyed superb looks at them from the ship.

December 25- Christmas Day found us back in the South Shetland Islands as we made our way toward Antarctic Sound. Our morning landing was at a small place called Half Moon Island. The chief inhabitants were Chinstrap Penguins and Antarctic Terns. A small colony of Antarctic Shags nested on rocks near the tip, cut off from the island at high tide.

During the afternoon we visited Penguin Island, where many of us hiked to the rim of the volcano, over 500 feet up. We found a few Adelie Penguins at the landing site here, but the colony was across the island. We also had superb views of nesting Southern Giant Petrels here, including the scarce white morph.

December 26- This morning we found ourselves immersed in the busy lives of Adelie Penguins when we went ashore at Paulet Island. There we found tens of thousands of Adelies along with the associated sights, sounds, smells, and slippery footing. These penguins had long ago taken over the historic stone hut built in 1903 by Captain C.A. Larsen and his men who were forced to over-winter here after losing their ship to the ice. We also saw good numbers of Snow Petrels nesting on the distant cliffs.

During the afternoon, we made a landing at Devil Island, where there were more Adelies, an optional hike, and at least one mixed pair of skuas, as well as another bird we suspected might have been a Brown X South Polar hybrid. Some of us who lingered were also witness to the sight of a Leopard Seal killing a penguin in the waters nearshore, a grim reminder of why those birds are often so hesitant to leave the shore. Later, as we negotiated Antarctic Sound a couple of hours later, we were treated to large flocks of Cape Petrels and smaller numbers of lovely Snow Petrels flying around the ship.

December 27- This morning we visited a key site in the history of Antarctic exploration- Elephant Island. Our focus was Point Wild, where Ernest Shackleton left most of his party under the leadership of Frank Wild as he set out on his daring small boat journey, seeking rescue, to South Georgia. These days Point Wild is a crumbling spit of land inhabited by scores of Chinstrap Penguins and the occasional seal. There was too much swell to effect a landing here (such is usually the case), but we were treated to an extended zodiac cruise, during which some of us got to see a Leopard Seal in its liquid element. Following that we headed out to sea toward the South Orkneys.

December 28- We had a landing planned in the South Orkneys today, but strong katabatic winds made even zodiac cruising out of the question. Nevertheless, we did make a transit of the area in the Clipper Adventurer, and the scenery was spectacular- ancient, moss covered islands surrounded by enormous grounded icebergs. In the dramatic changing light, it looked quite surreal. Good numbers of Southern Fulmar were seen as we cruised by, not too surprising as this is a nesting stronghold for the species. As we headed eastward, we began to see more albatrosses and petrels.

December 29- This was a full day at sea as we headed toward South Georgia. Many people spent time on deck and were rewarded with good looks at a variety of seabirds.

Antarctic Prions presented a photographic challenge as they zoomed around close overhead for those of us at the stern. At least one or two Slender-billed Prions were seen as well.

December 30- We arrived off the eastern end of South Georgia Island this morning. It was quite breezy, and a few Soft-plumaged Petrels- our first seen this trip- were seen by those keeping watch. We arrived at Grytviken around midday, and after we squared up with immigration, we were free to go ashore, where we made the obligatory toast to Sir Ernest Shackleton at his gravesite. From there it was onward to tour the defunct whaling station and the remarkable South Georgia museum, a world class operation in the wilderness, complete with a gift shop for some rare Southern Ocean shopping. Later in the afternoon, fierce katabatic winds with gusts to 70 knots made for an exciting zodiac ride back for many of us who chose to spend the most time ashore!

December 31- We made a very early landing at Gold Harbor, hoping for a pretty sunrise, but clouds put a damper on that, and only for a few seconds did we get a hint of the early morning glow that gives this bay its name. Nevertheless, we were ashore in a setting of abundant wildlife. Hitting the black sand beach we were greeted by Elephant Seals, Fur Seals, King Penguins, and Brown Skuas. Some ventured up a slippery hillside where Light-mantled Albatrosses nested on small rock outcroppings in the tussock. We had also planned a landing for St. Andrews Bay, but high wind and surf forced us instead to change that to another site, which offered shelter from the sea. We went to a scenic little cove called Godthul, the site of an old whaling operation, and there we found many fur seals and gentoo penguins. Old rusty barrels, many bones, and a few reindeer were reminders that the whalers had been here.

High winds continued through the afternoon, forcing the cancellation of the highly anticipated Shackleton hike, but many participants still went ashore at Stromness and did a small portion of the hike roundtrip in reverse. The weather reminded us what a harsh place this could be and how lucky we were to return to the safety of the ship. Back aboard the warm, comfortable Clipper Adventurer, the expedition staff put on a festive New Year's Eve party, and a few of us even stayed late enough to ring in the New Year.

January 1-The weather today was a significant improvement over the previous day. Sunshine greeted us upon our arrival at Salisbury Plain, the site of an immense King Penguin rookery, where Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy made some of the first detailed observations of the species over a period of several weeks in 1912 and 1913. This was a busy place where big brown wooly chicks approached us with curiosity, birds returned to the colony from the sea, and a large number of adults incubated their eggs. Massive Brown Skuas patrolled the colony and feasted on a number of penguin and seal carcasses. Our next landing was at a different sort of seabird colony. Not far away, at Prion Islet, Wandering Albatross nest in a loose colony alongside Southern Giant-Petrels on tussock covered hillsides. To see these giant birds sitting patiently at their nests while others wheeled overhead was magical, and for many perhaps the highlight of the cruise. Even Captain Philipp Dieckmann made a rare shore excursion here. Seeing the little South

Georgia Pipit was quite a bit tougher. For the most part they were seen quickly darting into the tussock grass, where they immediately became invisible.

Good weather continued into through the afternoon, and as we headed westward along the coast, we took time for a zodiac cruise of Right Whale Bay. There were no whales here, but there were more fur seals than seemed possible. Giant-Petrels were likewise abundant and were seen to prey upon the numerous small fur seal pups. After dinner we headed out into the fading light for one last zodiac cruise at South Georgia. We visited Elsehul, where the impact of a burgeoning population of fur seals was quite evident. Slopes, which were formerly covered by tussock grass were now denuded mudslides. Higher up, Grey-headed and Black-browed Albatosses nested on the cliffs, and across the bay, we found good numbers of Macaroni Penguins, a species which many of us had not yet seen because the weather had kept us away from their colonies for the previous two days.

January 2- With South Georgia behind us, we saw one last bit of land this morning- Shag Rocks. These pinnacles were covered with many hundreds of South Georgia Shags as well as their droppings from many years. We didn't really have time to make a circumnavigation of the rocks, as we were already a bit behind schedule. By the afternoon, the wind had freshened and we saw a few Soft-plumaged Petrels whizzing about, in addition to five species of albatrosses and a variety of petrels.

January 3- This was a full day at sea during which we saw 16 species of tubenoses. A few of these, most notably the diving petrels, were scarce and difficult to see well.

January 4- We were supposed to arrive at the Falklands today, but strong winds slowed our progress quite a bit, and by midday it was clear to many of us that any prospect of landing in the Western Falklands the following day had been lost. By evening, we had set our sights on a number of potential alternate landing sites of East Falkland for the following day. The pelagic birding was not as good as we had hoped. It seemed as though the strong westerlies had whisked many birds out to sea behind us. By late afternoon, however, it was evident that things were changing as a few Sooty Shearwater began to show. This was a sign that we were finally coming up over the continental shelf.

January 5- We made a long-awaited Falklands landfall at George Island this morning. It was still quite breezy and this low, barren piece of land did not offer much of a break from the wind, but there was so much wildlife that it didn't much matter. There were dozens of Upland and Ruddy-headed Geese, Magellanic Penguins nesting underfoot, loud and showy Magellanic Oystercatchers, and for those who went looking the endemic Cobb's Wren was not hard to find.

After lunch we repositioned to Bleaker Island, where we had the opportunity to see nesting Rockhopper Penguins. It was a long hike, and the landowners were kind enough to ferry some of the passengers up the hill in their Land Rovers, so that everyone had a chance to see these birds.

January 6- We pulled up to the wharf in Stanley this morning and made fast just off the bow of the massive British Antarctic Survey ship, the James Clark Ross. After the customs officer finished with our passports we reluctantly left the little blue ship, which had been our home for over two weeks. Most of the VENT group lit out on one last birding excursion in search of the Rufous-chested Dotterel, a smart-looking plover, which had eluded us the previous day. We caught up with these birds in short order, and we also enjoyed nice looks at another new species- Silver Teal- just a few miles outside town. From there we took the bus to lunch at the Upland Goose Hotel before our long ride out to Mount Pleasant Airport for the flight to Santiago.

January 7- Just over half the group went birding in the Andes this morning with local guide Michal Sallaberry, while the rest took a more leisurely day to enjoy Santiago. Our optional birding trip was a great success: in addition to fantastic looks at condors, we saw three Chilean endemics- Chilean Tinamou, Crag Chila, and Mustached Turca! We also enjoyed great views of a roosting Magellanic Horned Owl. That evening most of the group flew home, while some chose to spend extra time in Chile.

January 8- Most of us arrived back in the U.S. or Canada early this morning.

Bird List

The following bird list is based on James Clements' world checklist, so there are some notable differences here from last years list, which followed the AOU order.

The main trip list includes birds seen in the vicinity of Ushuaia, Argentina and Tierra del Fuego National Park as well as the birds seen on our cruise to Antarctica, South Georgia, and the Falkland Islands with the Clipper Adventurer. Birds seen on optional birding trips to Vicente Lopez (Buenos Aires) and Los Farallones (above Santiago) are listed separately.

King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*- We first encountered these birds ashore at Grytviken, where they had come ashore to molt. On Dec. 31, we visited our first rookery at Gold Harbor, and the following day, we saw truly prodigious numbers at Salisbury Plain.

Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua*- These are the most docile of the "brushtail" penguins, and also the most widespread. They nest in less dense colonies than Chinstraps and Adelies, and are more or less resident. We saw them in the South Shetlands, Antarctica, South Georgia, and the Falklands. We even visited the largest Gentoo rookery in the Antarctic at Cuverville Island.

Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*- We were fortunate on this trip to visit Paulet Island where thousands of these birds nest. We also encountered this species in the South Shetlands, where lesser numbers breed.

Chinstrap Penguin *Pygoscelis antarcticus*- This pugnacious bird is by far the dominant penguin in the South Shetlands. We were fortunate to make a landing at Chinstrap Mecca- Baily Head on Deception Island, where perhaps 100,000 pairs of these birds nest! We also saw scattered Chinstraps along the Antarctic Peninsula and around South Georgia where lesser numbers nest.

Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome*- We visited a colony at Bleaker Island, where some of the young were beginning to reach good size.

Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus*- These crested penguins are probably the most numerous penguin species nesting on South Georgia, but because they nest on steep tussocky slopes, they are the hardest to observe closely. They also favor the windward coast, so we were unable to visit a colony until the swell abated somewhat on Jan. 1

Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus*- We sometimes see this species in the Beagle Channel, but on this cruise, we did not find it until we reached the Falklands. There were good numbers nesting in the peaty soil of George Island.

White-tufted Grebe *Rollandia rolland*- We saw a couple at close to the shoreline at George Island.

Great Grebe *Podiceps major*- We saw a few of these at TdFNP, where they were nesting.

Silvery Grebe *Podiceps occipitalis*- Seen only at Bleaker Island by a few of us who scanned the pond there.

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*- These giant birds followed the ship on a number of days at sea, but were generally not seen as close to South America as the Royals. One of the highlights of the trip was visiting Wanderers at their nests on Prion Island in the Bay of Isles.

Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*- This species nests only around New Zealand, but is a fairly common visitor to waters off South America. We saw it on all of our sea crossings, but it was most common near the edge of the continental shelf. All birds observed were the Southern form- *D. e. epomophora*.

Gray-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma*- We saw many of these beautiful birds on several days at sea, and we also got to see them nesting at Elsehul.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophrys*- This was by far the commonest albatross of the trip, especially around South America, the Falklands, and also at sea. It was seen nesting during our zodiac cruise of Elsehul at South Georgia.

Light-mantled Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*- We had an exceptional encounter at

sea with ten or more of these elegant birds circling the ship on the afternoon of Dec. 21. At South Georgia, we observed nesting birds at several locations, where they typically nest in small loose colonies. The agility of this species allows it to nest on small ledges that other albatross species do not utilize.

Southern (Antarctic) Giant-Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*- Interestingly, the “GPs” which breed around South America and the Falklands are this species. We also saw *M. giganteus* at South Georgia, the South Shetlands, Antarctica, and at sea. We found them nesting at Penguin Island and Prion Islet. Dozens patrolled Right Whale Bay and Elsehul in South Georgia where they apparently made a good living off the abundant Fur Seal pups. A small number of the white morph were seen on a number of days.

Northern (Hall’s) Giant-Petrel *Macronectes halli*- This was the form of ‘GP’ most often seen hundreds of miles out to sea. They also nest at some sites in South Georgia, but there they were usually outnumbered by *M. giganteus*.

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*- We saw this species sporadically at sea, mostly around the South Shetlands and South Orkneys, where they nest in good numbers.

Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*- A single bird was seen and photographed after dinner on Dec. 21. Although we looked assiduously for it on subsequent days, there were no additional sightings.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense*- This species, a favorite of many participants, was very common and seen almost daily at sea. Large numbers were seen nesting at Deception Island and Elephant Island, large aggregations were also seen around Antarctic Sound and Paulet Island.

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*- Yet another crowd pleaser, these lovely birds were encountered on nine days of the cruise! The largest numbers were found at Paulet Island where birds were nesting high in the cliffs. We also found them resting on icebergs.

Kerguelen Petrel *Aphrodroma brevirostris*- A couple of us glimpsed a single bird at sea between South Georgia and the Falklands on Jan. 2.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*- We found modest numbers of these fast flying gadfly petrels on four days of the cruise. We first encountered it within sight of South Georgia on Dec. 30, but most were seen as we headed to the Falklands. The majority of these birds kept their distance from the ship, but persistence resulted in close looks for several of us.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*- This is a beautiful little bird, prion-like, but with a less erratic flight. They were most common in the Drake Passage. Lesser numbers were seen at sea approaching and departing South Georgia .

Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*- We saw large numbers at sea south of the Polar Front. Birds vaulting overhead on updrafts from the ship represented the ultimate photographic challenge. They nest in abundance at South Georgia, but are nocturnal around their colonies so as to avoid the skuas.

Slender-billed (Thin-billed) Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*- Before we crossed the Polar Front, all the prions (not many) we saw were found to be this species. We also saw a couple on days when most of the prions seen were *P. desolata*.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*- These big shearwater-like birds were seen on most days at sea. The white chin, which is not even present on all birds, was quite difficult to detect.

Greater Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*- This species was quite scarce and was only encountered by a few observers on Dec. 20 and Jan. 4. Small numbers nest at the Falklands, but their real stronghold is way to the east at Tristan and Gough.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*- This is essentially an inshore species. Most that we saw were in the vicinity the Falklands, which are a breeding ground. They are very common in the Beagle Channel and around Cape Horn but we crossed those waters in darkness, and saw just a few as we entered the Drake Passage.

Gray-backed Storm-Petrel *Garrodia nereis*- We looked hard for this species around kelp paddies as we approached the Falklands. Rough water made it hard to see the kelp at times, let alone these birds, which feed on small barnacles on the kelp and rest on or close to it.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*- This species was seen daily at sea in varying numbers. We also observed them flying around nest sites during the day in the South Shetlands and Antarctica.

Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta tropica*- This species was fairly common at sea and was seen on most days.

Common Diving-Petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*- This was not generally a good trip for “DPs”, but a few observers did identify this species. The majority of diving petrels seen, however, are best listed as *Pelecanoides sp.*

Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*- We saw some on Dec. 19, as we boarded our flight in Buenos Aires.

Rock Shag *Phalacrocorax magellanicus*- These birds were not nearly as numerous as the Imperial Cormorants, but they were seen at TdFNP and at a number of locations in the Falklands.

Antarctic Shag *Phalacrocorax bransfieldensis* We saw this species on a daily basis along the Antarctic Peninsula and the South Shetlands, where we had the opportunity to observe a number of nesting colonies.

South Georgia Shag *Phalacrocorax georgianus*- One of the true spectacles of the trip was at Shag Rocks, where the sight (and scent) of thousands of cormorants was quite impressive. We also observed lesser numbers at a number of sites around South Georgia and also at the SouthOrkneys, where this is the resident taxon.

Imperial Shag *Phalacrocorax atriceps*- We first observed this species, also known as the Blue-eyed Shag or King Cormorant, around Ushuaia and in the Beagle Channel. Later we visited a colony on Bleaker Island in the Falklands.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax cyanocephalus*- We saw a number of the distinctive Falkland Island race during our time there.

Black-faced Ibis *Theristicus melanopis*- We saw these on our visit to TdFNP.

Upland Goose *Chloephaga picta*- The Upland Goose was by far the commonest of the “sheldgeese” seen on this trip. It was seen around the vicinity of Tierra del Fuego National Park (hereafter TdFNP) and in the Falklands.

Kelp Goose *Chloephaga hybrida*- This species was common in marine environments around Ushuaia and in the Falklands.

Ashy-headed Goose *Chloephaga poliocephala*- We saw several in the vicinity of TdFNP.

Ruddy-headed Goose *Chloephaga rubidiceps*- We saw large number on George Island in the Falklands.

Flightless Steamer-Duck *Tachyeres pteneres*- We saw a few around TdFNP and Ushuaia.

Falkland Steamer-Duck *Tachyeres brachypterus*-
Very common in the Falklands, much more so than *T. patachonicus*.

Flying Steamer-Duck *Tachyeres patachonicus*- We saw a few of these around TdFNP, and there were at least additional sightings in the Falklands.

Speckled Teal *Anas flavirostris*- We saw a few of these compact little ducks around Ushuaia as well as near Stanley.

Crested Duck *Lophonetta specularioides*- These ducks were very common in estuarine environments around Ushuaia and throughout the Falklands.

Yellow-billed Pintail *Anas georgica*- We saw these around Ushuaia and also in South Georgia. The birds at the latter location were formerly treated as a separate species and are a curiosity because they are known to feed on carrion in winter.

Silver Teal *Anas versicolor*- Some of us saw a handful of these dapper little ducks just outside Stanley on the last morning, and a few were seen at Bleaker Island the day before.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*- We saw this species in the vicinity of Ushuaia and TdFNP as well as in the Falklands. Al Jaramillo has suggested that the resident tropical subspecies *ruficollis* and the southern subspecies group (*jota* and "*falklandica*") might merit recognition as separate species from the northern *Cathartes aura* group.

Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus*- We saw one of these giant birds overhead just inside TdFNP.

Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*- We had nice looks at a pair at TdFNP on Dec. 19 in the same area here we saw them the year before.

White-throated Caracara *Phalacrocorax albogularis*- We were lucky to find a rather scruffy looking one at the "old dump" between Ushuaia and TdFNP on our first day.

Southern Caracara *Caracara plancus*- Some of the group got to see a nesting pair at Bleaker Island.

Chimango Caracara *Milvago chimango*- These small slender caracaras were quite common in the vicinity of Ushuaia and TdFNP, where they are the ecological equivalents of crows.

Blackish Oystercatcher *Haematopus ater*- We saw a few of these in the Falklands. Much like the Black Oystercatcher *H. bachmani*, this species prefers rocky areas.

Magellanic Oystercatcher *Haematopus leucopodus*- This species was very common around Ushuaia and in the Falklands. It was even found in upland habitat on occasion.

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*- This common, loud, and conspicuous shorebird was found around Ushuaia and TdFNP.

Two-banded Plover *Charadrius falklandicus*- We saw good numbers of this attractive little shorebird in the Falklands including a sizable flock at Bleaker Island.

Rufous-chested Dotterel *Charadrius modestus*- We saw several of these attractive birds in a variety of plumages on a birding trip to the outskirts of Stanley on Jan. 6.

South American Snipe *Gallinago paraguaiiae*- Some of enjoyed good looks at George Island and another was seen the following day outside Stanley.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*- We found these birds to be fairly common on the Falklands.

Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis albus*- This peculiar scavenging shorebird has the distinction of being the only Antarctic bird without webbed feet. They were usually much in evidence around penguin colonies throughout Antarctica and South Georgia, and even in the Falklands where they are not known to nest.

Chilean Skua *Stercorarius chilensis*- Our only encounters were in Ushuaia and the Beagle Channel.

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*- This is the common skua in Antarctica, where it greatly outnumbers the Brown Skua and tends to be more likely than the latter to be seen flying over the ship. We had several opportunities to compare the two species in Antarctica.

Brown Skua *Stercorarius antarcticus*- This species was widespread. The birds we saw in the Falklands were *S. a. antarcticus* (which doesn't seem an appropriate trinomial, but that's it), and they were fairly small, like a South Polar, but chunky. The rest of the birds we saw- from South Georgia to the Peninsula- were *S. a. lonnbergi*, and these were massive. They feed more on penguins and other nesting seabirds (especially prions, which they dig out of their burrows) than *S. maccormicki*, which also forages extensively at sea.

Dolphin Gull *Leucophaeus scoresbii*- We found this attractive gull at the waterfront in Ushuaia and in also in the Falklands, where several attended the shag colony at Bleaker Island.

Kelp (Dominican) Gull *Larus dominicanus*- We saw Kelp Gulls from Ushuaia to Antarctica and all points in between, but not at sea as they generally stick close to breeding sites.

Brown-hooded Gull *Larus maculipennis*- Seen by a few observers in the Falklands.

South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*- We found these to be common around Ushuaia and the Falklands.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*- This species generally winters in the pack ice, particularly on the east side of the peninsula, so a single bird at sea, was a good find east of Elephant Island on Dec. 27.

Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*- This species was common and widespread, not only in Antarctica, but also in the South Shetlands and at South Georgia.

Blackish Cinclodes *Cinclodes antarcticus*- Known in the Falklands as the “Tussock Bird,” it is quite tame and usually only present on rat-free islands. Large numbers were encountered on both George and Bleaker Islands, and they were not averse to hopping up on one’s boot.

Dark-bellied Cinclodes *Cinclodes patagonicus*- A few people saw it in TdFNP.

Bar-winged Cinclodes *Cinclodes fuscus*- Seen by a few as we left the airport in Ushuaia.

Thorn-tailed Rayadito *Aphrastura spinicauda*- These active little forest birds were very common at TdFNP.

White-crested Elaenia *Elaenia albiceps*- We saw and heard a few of these flycatchers at TdFNP.

Austral Negrito *Lessonia rufa*- We saw it at the old dump near Ushuaia.

Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant *Muscisaxicola maclovianus*- A family group was well seen by many at Bleaker Island.

Chilean Swallow *Tachycineta meyeni*- We saw several of these attractive birds in the vicinity of Ushuaia and TdFNP.

Correndera Pipit *Anthus correndera*- We saw a few of these in the Falklands.

South Georgia Pipit *Anthus antarcticus*- This species is restricted to rat-free islands, so we were lucky to visit Prion Island, where it was quite common. Because it nests in the tussock, it can be very difficult to see when it is not engaged in advertising and defending territories.

Cobb’s Wren *T. cobbi*- Formerly considered conspecific with *T. aedon*, this Falklands endemic was well seen by many at George Island, where it foraged along the shoreline. It is usually only found on rat free islands.

(Southern) House Wren *Troglodytes aedon musculus*

This may be a different species than our North American House Wren. Time will tell.

We found *T. (a.) musculus* to be quite common in TdFNP.

Austral Thrush *Turdus falcklandii*- Belonging to the same genus as American Robin, this species was quite common and easily observed in the vicinity of TdFNP and in the Falklands.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*- We saw it in Ushuaia and Stanley.

Black-chinned Siskin *Carduelis barbata*- We encountered a few in TdFNP.

Patagonian Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus patagonicus*- We had great looks at these confiding birds at TdFNP.

Black-throated Finch *Melanodera melanodera*- We saw several of these on George Island and also in the countryside near Stanley.

Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis*- Hard to miss in southern South America, this species is common from sea level up to the treeline.

Long-tailed Meadowlark *Sturnella loyca*- We saw this species around Ushuaia and at all three birding sites in the Falklands. The adult males are stunning.

Mammals

This was generally not a good cruise for cetaceans. While later in the austral summer is typically better, we just didn't have much luck finding them at sea or along the peninsula on this particular cruise. On the other hand, it was a great trip for seals, and we saw most species on a number of days.

European Hare *Lepus capensis*- We saw at least one of these outside Stanley.

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*- Bunnies were abundant in TdFNP.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*- Seen by a few observers at Grytviken. Rats are a real problem for small seabirds and ground nesting birds where they occur. At South Georgia, pipits nest only on rat free islands, and in the Falklands, Blackish Cinclodes and Cobb's Wren are generally found only on islands not inhabited by rats.

Fin Whale *Balaenoptera physalus*- We saw a few *Balaenoptera* which might have been this species at sea, but no definitive sightings were made.

Antarctic Minke Whale *Balaenoptera bonaerensis*- We saw a few along the peninsula, and others at sea which were probably this species.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*- We had more difficulty than usual finding these, but we had good looks from the ship one afternoon along the peninsula.

Killer Whale *Orcinus orca*- We found a large group of perhaps 30 near the entrance to the Lemaire Channel. Great looks were had as some passed directly under our bow!

Long-finned Pilot Whale *Globiocephala melaena*- We observed a small group off the port side of the ship as we approached the Falklands on Jan. 4.

Hourglass Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus cruciger*- We saw a few briefly at sea on Jan. 3.

Peale's Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus australis*- Seen by some near the Falklands on Jan. 5.

Commerson's Dolphin *Cephalorhynchus commersonii*- Seen by some near the Falklands on Jan. 5.

Southern Sea Lion *Otaria byronia*- Some were seen at Bleaker Island in the Falklands.

Antarctic Fur Seal *Arctocephalus gazella*- We saw thousands of these on the shores of South Georgia and lesser numbers at sea. At times they seemed a bit menacing when we entered their territories, but fortunately they always backed off. With little competition for krill from the depleted stock of baleen whales in the Southern Ocean, fur seal numbers may be at an all time high.

Southern Elephant Seal *Mirounga leonine*- We saw lots of “sea elephants” on South Georgia and lesser numbers in the South Shetlands. These animals were harvested for their oil at South Georgia as recently as the 1960's.

Crabeater Seal *Lobodon carcinophagus*- These seals were fairly common along the peninsula where they often rested on the ice.

Leopard Seal *Hydrurga leptonyx*- We saw a few resting on ice, and a few swimming ones as well during zodiac cruises from Elephant Island to Palmer.

Weddell Seal *Leptonychotes weddelli*- We saw this species at a number of locations along the peninsula and also in the South Shetlands. It is a year-round resident of these areas not moving around with the pack ice like the crabbies and leps.

Reindeer *Rangifer tarandus*- These were introduced to South Georgia by the whalers, and hundreds still persist there in two big herds. We saw them at Godthul and Stromness.

Birds seen on the optional trip to the Andes from Santiago on Jan. 7, 2007

Chilean Tinamou *Nothoprocta perdicaria*
Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus*
Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*
Red-backed Hawk *Buteo polyosoma*
Mountain Caracara *Phalcoboenus megalopterus*
American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*
Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*
Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata*
Black-winged Ground-Dove *Metriopelia melanoptera*
Magellanic Horned Owl *Bubo magellanicus*
Chilean Flicker *Colaptes pitius*
Rufous-banded Miner *Geositta rufipennis*
Scale-throated Earthcreeper *Upucerthia dumetaria*
Crag Chila *Chilia melanura*
Bar-winged Cinclodes *Cinclodes fuscus*
Moustached Turca *Pteroptochos megapodius*
Rufous-tailed Plantcutter *Phytotoma rara*
White-crested Elaenia *Elaenia albiceps*
Fire-eyed Diucon *Xolmis pyrope*
Great Shrike-Tyrant *Agriornis lividus*
White-browed Ground-Tyrant *Muscisaxicola albifrons*
Blue-and-white Swallow *Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*
(Southern) House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*
Chilean Mockingbird *Mimus thenca*
Austral Thrush *Turdus falcklandii*
Black-chinned Siskin *Carduelis barbata*
Gray-hooded Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus gayi*
Mourning Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus fruticeti*
Band-tailed Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus alaudinus*
Common Diuca-Finch *Diuca diuca*
Greater Yellow-Finch *Sicalis auriventris*
Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis*
Long-tailed Meadowlark *Sturnella loyca*
Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*
Austral Blackbird *Curaeus curaeus*

Birds seen on the optional afternoon trip to Vicente Lopez

December 18, 2006
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*)
Cocoi Heron (*Ardea cocoi*)
Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)
Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*)
Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)
Southern Caracara (*Caracara plancus*)
Chimango Caracara (*Milvago chimango*)
Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)
White-winged Coot (*Fulica leucoptera*)
Red-gartered Coot (*Fulica armillata*)
Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*)
Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)
Picazuro Pigeon (*Patagioenas picazuro*)
Eared Dove (*Zenaida auriculata*)
White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*)
Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*)
Yellow-chevroned Parakeet (*Brotogeris chiriri*)
Guira Cuckoo (*Guira guira*)
Glittering-bellied Emerald (*Chlorostilbon aureoventris*)
Gilded Sapphire (*Hylocharis chrysura*)
Checkered Woodpecker (*Picoides mixtus*)
Green-barred Woodpecker (*Colaptes melanochloros*) – We saw the “Golden-breasted” form, which was formerly treated as a separate species.
Field Flicker (*Colaptes campestris*)
Rufous Hornero (*Furnarius rufus*)
Chicli Spinetail (*Synallaxis spixi*)
Small-billed Elaenia (*Elaenia parvirostris*)
White-crested Tyrannulet (*Serpophaga subcristata*)
Bran-colored Flycatcher (*Myiophobus fasciatus*)
Cattle Tyrant (*Machetornis rixosus*)
Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)
Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*)
White-winged Becard (*Pachyramphus polychopterus*)
Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*)
Gray-breasted Martin (*Progne chalybea*)
Brown-chested Martin (*Progne tapera*)
White-rumped Swallow (*Tachycineta leucorrhoa*)
(Southern) House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)
Masked Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila dumicola*)
Rufous-bellied Thrush (*Turdus rufiventris*)

Creamy-bellied Thrush (*Turdus amaurochalinus*)
Chalk-browed Mockingbird (*Mimus saturninus*)
European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
Sayaca Tanager (*Thraupis sayaca*)
Saffron (Yellow-) Finch (*Sicalis flaveola*)
Red-crested Cardinal (*Paroaria coronata*)
Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*)
Baywing (*Agelaioides badius*)
Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*)
House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)