

The Falkland Islands

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 - 23 November 2006

Report compiled by Cliff Waller



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Leader: Cliff Waller

Participants: Ann Bray
Peter Bray
Beryl Davis
Michael Davis
Christine Cheney
Ann Thomas

Day 1

Tuesday 7th November

Brize Norton

Everyone arrived at Brize Norton early, although our flight was not scheduled to leave for Ascension Island until 11 p.m. There was also about an hour's delay though before take off, but once away, it was a comfortable flight with generous leg room, and with the plane being only half full, we all managed to find places with additional spare seats.

Day 2

Wednesday 8th November

Ascension Island to the Falklands

Arriving on Ascension Island, at around 7:30 a.m., where I was able to meet up with a friend from my home village, who took me for a cup of coffee and a quick drive to see some of the island, although I saw little bird wise and none of us manage to see the Ascension Island Frigate. Once away again, our continuing flight was also comfortable and uneventful, but as we neared the Falkland Islands a couple of Tornados appeared just off each of our wings to escort us down to the new airport at Mount Pleasant. The airport formalities and the luggage took some time, but eventually we set off by bus for the hour or so drive to Stanley seeing our first new birds along the way, these included lots of Upland Geese, as well as Turkey Vulture, Red-backed Hawk, Crested Duck, Kelp Gull, Long-tailed Meadow Lark and Black-throated Finch.

After sorting rooms and taking tea in the comfortable Malvina Hotel, most of us went for an enjoyable walk along Stanley seafront, where, as well as a quick look at some of the shops, we found our first Southern Giant Petrel, Flightless Steamer Duck, Kelp Goose and Dolphin Gull. After a very pleasant dinner, we were all more than ready to head for our beds after the exceptionally long overnight flight.

Day 3

Thursday 9th November

Stanley & Volunteer Point

We awoke to find a strong southerly gale, but after breakfast, we still set off on a three-hour drive to Volunteer Point, the first part of our journey was on reasonable roads and although we made a few stops, we still manage to see our first White-tufted Grebe and Chiloe Widgeon.

The second part of our journey though, was a long slow bumpy drive across open moorland with extensive areas of White Grass and Diddle De with areas of Tall Fern. Few species were seen here as we travelled, as the exceptionally strong winds were keeping most of the birds down, although we did get very good views of Falkland Pipit and we also saw several Double-banded Plover. When nearing Volunteer Point, we stopped to use the toilets at the Warden's house, where we also saw our first Falklands Thrush, as well as several Long-tailed Meadow Larks, while a flock of Brown-hooded Gulls were also present and we got our first views of distant Gentoo and Magellanic Penguins.

After driving on and then walking out to the point, we spent several hours visiting the King and Gentoo Penguin colonies, spending much of the time, just watching the behaviour of these incredibly confident birds, as well as taking advantage of the many photographic opportunities, although with the strong wind blowing a considerable amount of stinging sand, it made life a little difficult at times. The Magellanic Penguins were more scattered and often sat outside the entrance of their burrows, which they often rapidly disappeared into on one's approach.

The King Penguins, many of whose chicks were almost fledged, also had a number of much later pairs, who still had eggs, while many of the Gentoo Penguin on their raised mounded nests were mainly much earlier in their nuptial cycle. Other species encountered here included our first Ruddy-headed Geese, and Rufous-chested Dotterel, while we also obtained our first good views of Two banded Plover, and Black-throated Finch, while offshore, a number of Giant Petrel, Black-browed Albatross and both Imperial and Rock Cormorants were seen.

The journey back across the moorland, was by a slightly less bumpy route, where we saw a number of Red-chested Dotterel, Long-tailed Meadow Lark and Falkland Thrush. The rest of the journey was fairly uneventful, and we saw nothing new, and everyone was pleased to get back to the hotel after what had been an extremely pleasant day, in spite of the weather. After a short rest and hot drinks some people even had time for a short stroll along the front again before dinner.

Day 4

Friday 10th November

Stanley to Port Howard

Our flights to West Falkland were early ones, with four of the group flying directly to Port Howard, while the remainder of us went via Pebble Island, but both of us flew over a recently wrecked ship, which was still leaking a considerable amount of oil. On our arrival, we found a pair of Two-banded Dotterel, with two small chicks, which were running ahead of our plane as we taxied in.

After sorting rooms and settling in at the lodge, we had time for tea and some excellent cake before taking a short walk down to the quay, where the locals were in full swing, shearing up to 40,000 sheep which had been rounded up. From the quay itself we had distant views of a couple of Commerson's Dolphin, as well as a number of Falkland Skua, Giant Petrel, Rock Shag and Flightless Steamer Duck, while Black throated Finch, and Falkland Thrush were also seen.

Later, we set off in the vehicles along the coast to a place where the old original Port Howard settlement was founded and where there was a small pond, which had been created by the removal of peat for fuel.

Here we ate our packed lunches on the shore, which gave us time to observe a nearby pair of Magellanic Oystercatchers, whose nest we eventually found with its two eggs, while we also saw our first Speckled Teal here, along with a number of now, more familiar shore species.

Later, we wandered along the shore, mainly botanising, finding a few interesting species, including the attractive Pale Maiden, we also saw a few more birds, including our first Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant, while Brown-headed Gull was new for some of the group. We also visited the tiny graveyard, where the headstones of two of the original settlers have been fenced off for protection.

We then went back towards Port Howard, seeing a couple of Two-banded Plover along the way, before we headed inland for a one a half-hour drive over some slightly rougher terrain. We made several brief stops getting excellent close views of Rufous-chested Dotterel and Long-tailed Meadow Lark, while other new species included about twelve Crested Caracaras.

Continuing on towards Mount Rosalie farm we stopped to have a short break in the shepherd's cottage before visiting one of the nearby barns to see a pair of Barn Owl, which are a very scarce Falklands bird.

On our journey back we only encountered similar species to those seen on the outward journey, so made no stops and arrived back at Fort Howard around 6 p.m, giving everyone ample time to clean up before enjoying a really good home cooked supper.

Day 5

Saturday 11th November

Port Howard –Gladstone Bay Area

Leaving Fort Howard at around 9am, we followed the same main route as yesterday as far as Many Branched Creek, seeing the same selection of species, as we travelled, such as Rufous-chested Dotterel, Crested Caracara and Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant. This time though, we had to travel up the very steep slope of Mount Jock to reach the other side of the islands hill range, which apparently normally gives you superb views out to sea, where a number of other islands can be seen, but the extremely low cloud, denied us the pleasure.

On reaching Gladstone Bay, although we were still half a mile or so from the sea, we were greeted by the sight of three Gentoo Penguin colonies, which we were able to get extremely close to without disturbing them. Here we watched for some time observing several fierce battles between some of the adults, as well as a considerable stealing of nest material from neighbours. This species builds a substantial nest, into which it lays its two, large eggs. Even some inquisitive cattle coming right up to some of the nests seemed to raise only mild interest by the sitting birds. We were also able to observe the birds, making the long trek up from the sea, with some oddly nearing the colony, only to meet birds heading in the other direction, and turning and accompanying them all the way back to the shore.

We also headed for the shore, where the first to arrive, Peter and Christine saw our first Sea Lion, while the rest of us had to be content with a variety of other species, including more Gentoos and lots of Flightless Steamer Ducks, Upland and Ruddy-headed Geese as well as Falkland Skua.

Later, we walked along the cliffs to visit the cormorant colony, where we saw a number of nesting Rock Shag, that provided us with very good close views, while a flock of King Shag were also very obliging.

After lunch we headed back inland, before turning back towards the shore to try and visit the ship wreck that we had flown over on our way to Port Howard. We had to make several attempts before hitting on a suitable route, which eventually took us very close to where it had run aground on the previous Sunday. It was only just offshore, and still losing a great deal of oil, and after taking a few photographs, we then had a walk along the shore, finding the lifeboat, which had enabled the crew to escape. Little was seen here fauna wise, although several species were present that we had seen on previous days.

The journey back to Port Howard was uneventful, and we saw nothing new, and arrived back in good time for a late afternoon tea and some more excellent cake.

Day 6

Sunday 12th November

Port Howard and Fox Bay West Falkland

We set off at around 9 a.m. for Fox Bay, making our first stop a little beyond Many Branched Creek to look for the endemic Yellow Orchid, but although we found lots of plants, none were in flower. We then visited the nearby wreck of Seahawk, which was shot down by a Harrier jump jet during the Falklands War, we then moved only a short distance further down, where we stopped to see the wreck of a Mirage fighter plane, which has also been downed by a Harrier. Only a few birds were seen as we travelled, these included our first Flying steamer Duck, as well as many Long-tailed Meadow Lark and Rufous-chested Dotterel.

Our first major stop was at Hawke's Nest Ponds, where we also lunched, here, we found our first Black-necked Swans, two pairs, one of which had cygnets, which we watched riding on the adults backs. Other new species here, included Yellow-billed Pintail and Grass Wren, which showed itself well, while other species seen included Chiloe Wigeon, White-tufted Grebe, and Speckled Teal.

We then continued on to Fox Bay, seeing Red-backed Hawk and a pair of Two-banded Plover with three small chicks as we passed through the village. On reaching the point, there were several Gentoo Penguin and our first Snowy Sheathbill, as well as both King and Rock Shags, several Falklands Skua also came and went during our stay, while offshore lots of Black-browed Albatross was seen, some of them quite close in. There was also a Red-backed Hawk nesting on the adjacent cliff face, which had at least one chick, which popped its head up from time to time.

Just inland, there was a Gentoo Penguin colony which used to comprise of several hundred pairs, but due to predation by the nesting Hawks only ninety-three nests were occupied at the time of our visit.

We then set off on our long journey back towards Port Howard, but soon stopped at the Memorial just out of Fox Village, that lists the names of the people buried in the adjacent cemetery, which is no longer accessible to locals as it is still surrounded by an Argentine minefield.

Continuing our journey, we saw little new, although another Flying Steamer Duck was seen.

After supper, we drove the short distance across the bay to the local airfield to watch an excellent fireworks display put on for Remembrance Sunday.

Day 7

Monday 13th November

Port Howard to Pebble Island

After an early breakfast we headed once again to the airport for our 8:30 am flight where after farewells to our hosts Sue and Wayne we were away within ten minutes flying up over the hill, and out across the sea on our short flight to Pebble Island, where we were met, by Jacqui and Alan our new hosts who soon whisked us off to the old Estate Managers house, which is now run as a hotel.

After a gentle settling in period with the now usual tea and cakes, we set off late morning, with packed lunches for a walk of about one and a half hours crossing the island towards the Big Pond. We passed several other wet areas along the way, seeing lots of interest, including more Chiloe Wigeon and both Two-banded Plover and Rufous-chested Dotterel. We also got our first really good views of a flock of sixteen White-rumped Sandpiper, while other species included the now regular Long-tailed Meadow Lark, as well as Falkland Pipit.

On reaching The Big Pool we saw a number of species including White-tufted Grebe, Speckled Teal and Black-necked Swan. Here we also got our first really good views of Yellow-billed Pintail and Flying Steamer Duck, while also finding as our first Silver Teal. We also found a dead Speckled Teal and an Upland Goose nest with six eggs. Several plants were also found including Changing-forget-me-not, Falkland Lavender and Falkland Eye-bright. We lunched in the shelter of the dunes overlooking the lake, which allowed the birds to settle down again, providing us with some excellent views, and our first Black-crowned Night Heron flew in and landed close by.

After lunch we headed along the north side of the lake, getting good views of several species, but found nothing new. We then cut through the dunes to Elephant Beach, before walking along the shore back to the small pond, but apart from a few Black-browed Albatross offshore we saw very little. At the pond we found another Flying Steamer Duck, about eighteen Speckled Teal, and a few more Chiloe Wigeon. There were also both Ruddy-headed Geese and Upland Geese with broods of young swimming on the water, enabling us to see the obvious differences between the two lots of goslings.

After wandering back to the lodge for afternoon tea, everyone then did their own thing, with some wandering down to the landing stage, where about ten Black-crowned Night Heron were present, while Flying Steamer Duck and several other species were also seen again.

Day 8

Tuesday 14th November

Pebble Island

Our excursion on this day was to the west of the island and our three vehicles kept going until we reached the cove near Green Runcon, where there is a colony of nesting Giant Petrel, which we were able to view from a distance through the telescope, as this species is particularly sensitive to disturbance.

There were also some nesting Magellanic, and Gentoo Penguin, and as we were leaving Christine spotted a single King Penguin in with a small group of Gentoo, an unusual occurrence here, while a short walk along the nearby beach provided us with some excellent close views of the Gentoo, some of which walked right up several of the group, while a couple of the Dolphin Gull were also very approachable.

Driving on, we then stopped to have a look at an Argentine Learjet, where a Memorial has been placed. Here Alan told us the fascinating story of how it was shot down at 40,000 feet by a missile, this in spite of 25,000 feet being the missiles normal maximum effective range, and thus killing the highest ranking officer to be lost in the Falklands War.

Our next stop was the highlight of the day, it was at the Rockhopper Penguin colony, East of Marble Horse Paddock, where we lunched and spent a considerable time photographing these endearing little penguins. We were also able to locate at least three Macaroni Penguins amongst them, as well as an Erect-crested Penguin whose normally home is the Sub Antarctic islands of New Zealand. We also had time to watch the Falkland Skuas parasitizing the colony and saw several of these pirates take at least two eggs. We also watched with fascination the Rockhoppers hopping, feet together, up and down the steep cliff to the sea.

We then drove via Marble Shanty and the northwards again to Pebble Beach where we walked on the beach to look for some of its bright coloured and opaque stones, while some of the group walked along the beach to be picked up at the other end, the remainder drove round through the horse paddock. Those who walked found a couple of Upland Goose nest and saw lots of Two-banded Plover, some of them with small chicks, while several White-rumped Sandpipers were also present. It also provided an opportunity to photograph at close quarters both Kelp Goose and Crested Duck.

On our way back we stopped at some other Gentoo colonies below Middle Peak, this being over one of a half miles from the sea, and we were surprised to find that a number of the birds in one of the colonies had already hatched their eggs, and there were several young of between a few days to over a week old, this being unusual as the earliest hatching is normally not until at least early December.

Our final stop on our journey back was for another Red-backed Hawk, this one being extremely close sitting on a pile of old wire. Close to here we also visited the SAS Memorial cairn, erected to commemorate the first landing of British troops during the Falklands War, when they destroyed 11 of the enemy's aircraft, including several Pucara ground attack planes, which obviously saved many British. This was also the only successful SAS operation of the campaign.

Day 9

Wednesday 15th November

Pebble Island

We awoke to find strong winds and very heavy rain, so delayed our scheduled start for an hour or so, by which time the rain had eased, and rather surprisingly, we got through the remainder of the day, with only the odd shower.

This time, we visited the east of the island, passing the big pool again, which held many of the species seen here previously, before continuing on past Long Pond, Green Pond, Bett's Pond and Swan Pond, which between them provided us with an excellent variety of species, including a total of fifty plus Spectacled Teal, circa twenty Chileo Widgeon, seven Yellow-billed Pintail and nine White-tufted Grebe, along with several Flying Steamer Duck and the usual geese, but we failed to find anything new.

We then headed south by Sheep Harbour, towards Tamar Pass, stopping off at the mixed seabird colonies, which held good numbers of Rockhopper Penguin including a leucistic individual, which was much photographed, other species here included Imperial Shag. The area all around these colonies were littered with the sucked eggs of both species as many Falkland Skua were in attendance, one of which was even seen to take a fairly large Upland Goose gosling, while scanning down below the cliffs we also found a group of nine Sea Lion.

Heading north passed Cape Tamar, we then went to look for Cassin's Falcon, the local distinct race of Peregrine, but only Jacqui manage to see it disappearing around the point, which unfortunately corresponded with a sudden squall which sent us scurrying back to the vehicles. Lots of Black-browed albatross were flying close offshore here, while we also saw several Turkey Vulture and Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant.

We then started the journey back, eventually heading west to Elephant Beach, although we stopped for several things along the way, including a mixed flock of waders, with over thirty White-rumped Sandpiper and some Two-banded Plover. We then drove back along the beach, having to get the Land Rover into 4-wheel-drive for the first time. Here we saw over thirty Flightless Steamer Duck and our first Black Oystercatcher of the day.

Day 10

Thursday 16th November

Pebble Island to Saunder's Island

We awoke to heavy snow and sleet with all of the distant hills white, right down to their bases, but our flight to Saunder's Island, arrived on time, although we did experience an uncomfortable heavy snowstorm on the way, fortunately it cleared just as we reached the island coming in to land.

We were met by Susan and Biffo our new hosts, who whisked us off to our comfortable accommodation, where we lingered for tea before setting off across the island to visit the Black-browed Albatross colony. Our journey was through a mixture of sun and snow and sleet, but we did see our first Striated Caracara as we travelled. On reaching the cliffs, we found many obliging albatrosses sitting on their raised mud nests, which appear to be a considerable achievement as the birds seem only able to move small amounts of mud at a time. A few birds were on eggs, but many seemed not yet to have laid. We also had the opportunity to photograph a very close Striated Caracara before we had to scurry off to find shelter in the Land Rover as another storm approached.

Later, most of us wandered off along the cliff edge finding even closer and more obliging albatrosses, while a few of us walked even further, as far as a superb Rockhopper nesting colony, this time there were around rocks, with many of the birds perching up on the boulders, providing fantastic photographic opportunities, along with the neighbouring King Shag. A few new plants were also found here including Skottsberg's Buttercup, while Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant were also frequent long the cliffs, as well as a few Long-tailed Meadow Lark.

After returning to the vehicles and starting our journey back some Commerson's Dolphins were spotted amongst the surf close inshore, and we drove down to the beach to get better views of them, there were about ten in all, and they were riding the surf, right up to the very edge of the beach, we also found a slightly oiled King Penguin here, while both Gentoo and Magellanic Penguin were also present. A quick visit to a nearby lake produced little and we then followed the coast seeing a variety of wildlife along the way, including Two-banded Plover and Black-crowned Night Heron.

We then drove west to visit the site of the first British settlement in the Falklands, this was in 1765, although now deserted. It was settled with a population of up to 200 people. Returning past the farm, we drove to the large lake which we could see in the distance from our accommodation, here we found little, apart from Speckled Teal, but the large waves and choppy water, created by a strong wind meant it was difficult to see anything, but we did find a rare plant here Arrow-leaved Marigold, although it was not in flower. We then returned to cottage for an excellent supper of local lamb.

Day 11

Friday 17th November

Saunder's Island to Sea Lion Island

Most of the group went for a walk around before breakfast, with varying success, a couple of new plants were found, while birds included Black-necked Swan, Chiloe Widgeon, White tufted Grebe and Black-chinned Siskin.

Our flight out was delayed, and it was almost lunchtime before we got away, with part of the group, heading straight for Sea Lion Island, while the rest of us travelled via Fox Bay, the flights were a little bumpy due to the weather. After arriving at this lovely lodge, sorting rooms and taking lunch we then went off on an interesting walk around the island, visiting the cliffs near tussock pond, where we encountered a very tame Striated Caracara and first Tussock-birds, and we also found three new plants, Wild Celery, Coastal Nassauvia, and the Native Strawberry.

We headed inland to pass Long Pond, where we saw our first Silvery Grebe. We then headed towards Rockhopper Point where along the way we got close views of Falkland Snipe. Furthermore saw about seventy Rockhopper Penguin and a much larger number of Imperial Shag. We also visited the memorial to HMS Sheffield, which eventually sank a few miles offshore here.

We headed across the island to Gulch Boat Landing, seeing Rufus-breasted Dotterel, Two-banded Plover and Black-throated Finch amongst other species along the way. The narrow gully, which is the landing place for the islands annual supply boat, is also a nesting site for Rock Shags, enabling a very close approach. There were also a number of Black-browed Albatross feeding close offshore here.

Several more species were seen on a journey back, including more Striated Caracara, while on the pond the number of Silvery Grebe increased to seven.

After supper one or two of the men staying at the lodge, who worked for the Antarctic Survey, gave us a very interesting account and a film show about their work on South Georgia.

Day 12

Saturday 18th November

Sea Lion Island

We made a late start for the eastern end of the island getting excellent views of Grass Wren along the way, and on reaching The Neck we encountered our first since Southern Elephant Seal, while the pools here held about eighteen White-rumped Sandpipers, and several Two-banded Plover. Heading to the North Beach we found our first really big bull Elephant Seals, getting exceptionally close views and good photographic opportunities.

Moving on we saw many more Elephant Seals, we even had to carefully negotiate several large bulls, as we made our way through the dunes to a hide which overlooks a colony of Giant Petrel, where we spent some time, photographing them and while here we were regularly visited by an extremely tame Tussock Bird, which kept popping in and out of the hide.

After leaving the hide we headed to the south cliffs. Here the cliff tops were dominated by tussock grass, several feet high, but even here, the lower beach, was the haunt of more large Elephant Seals, but we also found our first Cobb's Wren, getting superb close views.

Heading back towards the lodge, some took the short route, while the rest of us followed the beach, which resulted in many more encounters with Elephant Seals, as well as several birds, including Magellanic Oystercatcher and Flightless Steamer Ducks, some of which had young, while offshore numerous feeding Black-browed Albatross were accompanied by Sooty Shearwater, along with South American Terns, while along the shore Dolphin Gull and Black-crowned Night Heron also showed well. While those who took the shorter route back saw a Peregrine Falcon.

We also have stopped to visit The Gentoo Penguin colony, where some were found to already have hatched chicks, several plants were also found including Sea Cabbage and Scurvy Grass, as well as our first Antarctic Bedstraw. Later in the day we headed to the North Beach, near Cow Point, finding our first Yellow pansy along the way and at the beach. We had a further exciting encounter with a very large and aggressive bull Elephant Seal.

Day 13

Sunday 19th November

Sea Lion Island

Christine, who was out very early to visit the beach saw three Cobb's Wren and several other species. Most of the group then headed out to the shore straight after breakfast, as we had received news that some Killer Whales had been seen and after some searching, we eventually spotted five off Rum Island, these fortunately eventually came much closer to where we were. The pod included a huge male with an exceptionally tall fin, while they also had a quiet small, young one with them. We watched them for some time before returning to the lodge around 10 a.m.

On arriving back we found that those who had stayed behind, had also had some excitement as a young male Elephant Seal had tried to get through the fence surrounding the lodge, eventually getting itself caught up in the wire, and having to be cut free before it could be released.

At around 10:30 am, we headed out again towards Tussock Pond and then continued on towards East Loafers, seeing a number of species along the way, including some very close Falkland Snipe and a pair of Tussock-birds, which we watched building a nest in a drainage pipe. On reaching the cliffs west of the fenced off tussock area, we located about fifteen Sea Lions and more surprisingly, also managed to see Fur Seal. Two of the Orcas also appeared, enabling those who went missing in the morning to catch up on them.

We then headed inland to Long Pond, where we lunched, but by now the wind was quite strong and we only saw Speckled Teal and five Silvery Grebes. On our way back we stopped to look at the large gardens, belonging to the lodge, which are protected by a high native Box Wood hedge. Here, we found several very tame Striated Caracaras, and a few Black-chinned Siskins.

Later, after returning to the lodge for smoko, we all did our own thing for the rest of the afternoon, and between us knocked up quite an impressive list of birds and plants, which included Snowy Sheathbill, Falklands Snipe, Cobb's Wren and Grass Wren, as well as lots of Magellanic and Gentoo Penguins, while plants included lots of the Native Violet.

Day 14

Monday 20th November

Sea Lion Island

Christine was again the only one out before breakfast, seeing Snowy Sheathbill and Grass Wren, amongst a number of other species. Later four of us got a lift to the extreme western end of the island, near Beaver Pond, while the remainder of the group potted about around the lodge area. At Beaver Pond, so-called because this is where the Beaver Float Planes used to land, we found two new plants Native Stonecrop and our first Curled Dock, while the entire area was riddled with the nesting burrows of Magellanic Penguin, some of these even had side holes, where you could watch the sitting bird, and even more surprisingly, we found one pair with a single egg sitting out in the open in a shallow depression.

Due to the high winds and a little drizzle, we decided not to struggle into a headwind to across the island to visit the Rockhopper colony. So headed back eastwards towards Long Pond, but we still got close views of lots of birds, as we walked, including Rufus-chested Dotterel, Falkland Snipe, Black-throated Finch, and several other species, while new plants found included first Woolly Falkland Ragwort and Falkland Cudweed.

We again lunched near Long Pond, where we were pestered for titbits by both Striated Caracara and Tussock-bird. After setting off again, we were fortunate enough to get good close, photographic opportunities for both Silvery Grebe and Silver Teal on the lake, while other species here included Crested Duck, one of which kept chasing most of the other species on the Pond, particularly the Speckled Teal. Along the shore we also found one of the endemic Arrow-leaved Marigold again, but the rest of our journey back was uneventful, although we did get close views of many of the species seen earlier in the day.

On our return, we found that the others had spent most of their day around the Gentoo and Magellanic Penguin colonies.

Later several of us went out for a walk seeing a variety of species including a good number of Black-browed Albatross offshore, along with a number of Sooty Shearwater, both species of shag and some very large rafts of Flightless Steamer Duck, while the grasslands provided as with Falkland Snipe, Grass Wren, and several other species.

Having a window seat at supper provided us with the usual views of Gentoo and Magellanic Penguin's and distant Elephant Seals, but we also spotted a displaying Snipe and a hunting Short-eared Owl. While earlier in the day, we were able to make use of the telescope to get better views of five distant Killer Whales.

Day 15

Tuesday 21st November

Sea Lion Island to Stanley

Christine was out again just after 5a.m. and saw the Killer Whales had made a kill out near Rum Island, but she also saw about twenty Dolphin Gulf and ten White-rumped Sandpiper.

Ann was the only one on the first flight out at 9.25, while the rest of us had time to a final look at the Penguins and were also able to watch a couple of bull Elephant Seals having impressive fight, while other species seen included Black-browed Albatross, sooty Shearwater, Snowy Sheathbill, Falkland Snipe and Black-throated Finch.

Our flight out left at 11 a.m., by which time Ann was already shopping in Stanley, but on our arrival back in the town almost everyone rapidly joined her, and numerous souvenirs and presents were bought, with the main, in particular, spending a lot of time at the post office stamp shop. Visits were also made to the Cathedral and the excellent Falkland Island Museum, which gives a wonderful insight into the past life of these remote islands, the exhibits being particularly strong on the past, agriculture and fishing industries, including Whaling and Sealing, while there is also a perfect replica general store, from the 1930s. There is also a good selection of other natural history items as well as some military and social history exhibits.

Day 17

Wednesday 22nd November

Stanley

Only five of us set off on the pelagic trip from Stanley and we were soon heading out of the sound passing a large Russian Cruise Ship on its way in. We also passed a fishing boat, heading into port, which was being followed by Giant Petrel and our first Pintado Peterel. Once out of the shelter of the island. The sea became much rougher with quite a heavy swell, and it was here that the crew started to throw out the chum, birds were at first slow to appear, with only a few Black-browed Albatross and Giant Petrel, but after a few runs up-and-down more birds started to appear including a few Sooty Shearwater, White -chinned Petrel, Wilson's Petrel and some more Pintado Petrel. Our final pass proved to be the best, with more species coming in very close to the boat.

We then headed off at speed to Kidney Island, where we managed to get in very close into the island to ensure good views of the Rockhopper Penguins, which nest right up at the top of a surprisingly high steep cliff face, this was by far the steepest nesting site we had seen for these birds, and it's hard to imagine how these small Penguins manage to hop up such a incredibly sheer cliff. A lot more Sooty Shearwaters were feeding just offshore here, while we also got our only sighting of a Southern Fulmar as it flew by.

On our way back, we watched a Nimrod plane making a dummy landing at Stanley airport. On our return, we found that Mike and Beryl, who had stayed in Stanley shopping, had seen Commerson's Dolphin and a Sea Lion in the harbour. After warming up and lunch, several of us went out shopping again, while others visited other sites of interest, including the Museum.

Day 18/19

Thursday 23rd/Friday 24th November

Falkland Islands to the United Kingdom

Our return flight from Mount Pleasant was not until mid-morning, but with an hour or more travel to the airport and a required early check-in, we had to leave Stanley early morning, seeing a number of the now extremely familiar birds along the way.

The queuing and airport formalities were again slow, but once away we made good time to Ascension Island, where an hour or so refuelling stop gave us time for a leg stretch. Most of us then managed at least some sleep on the remainder of the journey.

On our early morning arrival at Brize Norton we soon collected our baggage, and after the usual farewells everyone headed off to their various destinations. So ended a very pleasant and successful tour...

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Species Lists

Birds

	Common name	Scientific name	November														
			8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>		700c						1	1						
2	Gentoo Penguin	<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>		1000+		300+	104		700+	500+	3	400c	300+	500+	200c	100+	
3	Erect-crested Penguin	<i>Eudyptes sclateri</i>							1								
4	Rockhopper Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>							1000+	600+	500+	70c				70c	
5	Macaroni Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>							3								
6	Magellanic Penguin	<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>		20+					70c	50+	50+	40c	30c	60c	120+	30c	
7	White-tufted Grebe	<i>Rollandia rolland</i>		2			5	7		9		1					
8	Silvery Grebe	<i>Podiceps occipitalis</i>										7		5	10		
9	Black-browed Albatross	<i>Diomedea melanophris</i>		10			30+	5	20+	60+	300+	200c	120+	120+	120+	80+	150+
10	Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	20+	15	40c		15	10	85	20c	20c	17	100+	40c	12	10	30c
11	Southern(Silver-Grey)Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialisoides</i>															1
12	Cape Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>															6
13	White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>															1
14	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>											40c		6		100+
15	Rock Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>	9	8	10	50+	10	1	20	20+	5	30+	30+	10	30c	10	15
16	Imperial Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i>		2		100+	30c		50c	50+	500+	200+	6	12	10	20+	30c
17	Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>					2	10	4	1	2		1			1	
18	Black-necked Swan	<i>Cygnus melancoryphus</i>					11	6		8		4					
19	Ruddy-headed Goose	<i>Chloephaga rubidiceps</i>		20c	9	7	8	20+	30c	50c	5	8	30c	70+	40c	17	
20	Upland Goose	<i>Chloephaga picta</i>	50+	30+	50+	40+	200+	80c	80+	250+	100+	100+	40+	50c	200c	20+	20c
21	Kelp Goose	<i>Chloephaga hybrida</i>	4	4	8		7	2	8	7	40+	50+	12	9	14	7	6
22	Crested Duck	<i>Lophonetta specularioides</i>	9	4			4	5	7	12	3	9	5	2	6	6	12
23	Falkland Flightless Steamer Duck	<i>Tachyeres brachydactyla</i>	6	7	8	25c	20+	8	30c	40+	20c	10	80+	60+	120+	50+	9
24	Flying Steamer Duck	<i>Tachyeres patachonicus</i>					3	4		7							
25	Speckled Teal	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>			2	2	20	30c	1	50c	6	7		3	3		
26	Chiloe Wigeon	<i>Anas sibilatrix</i>		3			2	8		20+	1	1					
27	Yellow-billed Pintail	<i>Anas georgica</i>					2	4		5							
28	Silver Teal	<i>Anas versicolor</i>						2		7					2		

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			8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
29	Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>															
30	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	30c	10	12	5	10	6	15	8	6	8	11	9	10	5	17
31	Red-backed Hawk	<i>Buteo polyosoma</i>	2	1			4		3		1	1					
32	Striated Caracara	<i>Phalacrocorax australis</i>									5	7	6	20+	14	8	
33	Crested Caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>			13	5	3			1							
34	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>											1				
35	Blackish Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ater</i>		4	5	8	8	50+	40+	4	30+					8	
36	Magellanic Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus leucopodus</i>	8	20+	6		6	50c		40c	7	9	20+		20+		2
37	Two-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius falklandicus</i>		3	6			6	40+	16		7	9	11	7		
38	Rufous-chested Dotterel	<i>Charadrius modestus</i>		14	11	6	15	30c	12	2	6	1	3	9	5		
39	Magellanic Snipe	<i>Gallinago paraguaiiae</i>				2			1			1	6	7	16	5	
40	White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>		2				16	10	40+			18	7	15	10	
41	Snowy Sheathbill	<i>Chionis alba</i>					8	1	5	18			5		19	8	
42	Antarctic (Falkland) Skua	<i>Catharacta skua antarctica</i>	3		8	7	7	3	20+	20c	7	20+	20+	20c	11	5	8
43	Dolphin Gull	<i>Larus scoresbii</i>	20+		3	8	6	6	2	8		12	20c	3	2	20c	8
44	Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	30c	200+	30+	20c	20c	20+	30+	30c	30+	50+	20+	8	40c	11	20+
45	Brown-hooded Gull	<i>Larus maculipennis</i>		30c	1	4				2			38				
46	South American Tern	<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>	5	14	5	6	4	6	15	7	9	11	12	10	9	3	12
47	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>			2												
48	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>											2		1		
49	Tussac-bird	<i>Cinclodes antarcticus</i>										40c	50+	25c	40c	12	
50	Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola macloviana</i>			2	6	4	2	4	7	8	3	4	5	6		
51	Falkland Pipit	<i>Anthus correndera</i>		4	15	20+	30+	8	10	10	1	4	1	2			
52	Grass Wren	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>		1			1						1	2	3		
53	Cobb's Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon cobbi</i>											1	3	1		
54	Falkland Thrush	<i>Turdus falklandii</i>	2	16	17	12	10	4	6	2	8	4	5	9	11	2	3
55	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	20c	8												20c	20c
56	Black-chinned Siskin	<i>Carduelis barbatus</i>			3	7	3	1			2	3		2			
57	Black-throated Finch	<i>Melanodera melanodera</i>	1	7	9	6	7		4		2	7	8	20+	12		
58	Long-tailed Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella loyca</i>	2	30+	20+	16	30+	10	16	11	7	2					5

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Mammals

1	Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>			1												
2	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		1													
3	Killer Whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>												5			
4	Commerson's Dolphin	<i>Cephalorhynchus commersonii</i>			3						10						
5	Peale's Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus australis</i>											2				
6	Southern Sea Lion	<i>Otaria flavescens</i>				1				9				15			
7	Southern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga leonina</i>											80c	40+			

Fish

Falkland Minnow

Galaxias maculatus