

# The Falkland Islands

Naturetrek Tour Report

5 - 20 November 2010



Gentoo Penguins



Penguin colony viewing



Southern Elephant Seals



Striated Caracara



King Penguins

Report compiled by Cliff Waller

Images by kind courtesy of Reg Redmore



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

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

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

Tour Leader:	Cliff Waller
Participants:	Sarah Cole
	Donald Farlow
	Maxine Farlow
	Reg Redmore
	Penny Sinclair
	Christopher Woodman
	Mary Woodman

## Day 1

Friday 5th November

### Brize Norton

Everyone arrived at Brize Norton in good time, for check in, although our flight was not scheduled to leave for Ascension Island until 6am. Our flight was a little late getting away, but the seats were comfortable with generous leg room compared to most flights. A brief stop for refuelling on Ascension Island, provided us with a much appreciated leg stretch, but the only bird we saw here was the introduced Common Myna.

## Day 2

Saturday 6th November

### Stanley to Port Howard

After our late arrival last night we had a reasonable time for breakfast and repacking, before heading out to Stanley Airport for our 7:50 a.m. flight to Port Howard, but not before having already seen our first House Sparrow, Southern Giant Petrel and Rock Shag before we left our hotel. Our flight was delayed due to fog, which is an unusual occurrence here, but the delay was less than half an hour and six of us were soon loaded into the tiny Islander plane, with the remaining two of our group to follow-on on a later flight. Due to the weather, we flew very low along Stanley Sound, which gave us ample opportunity to enjoy the landscape and see a few birds such as our first South American Tern and Kelp Gull.

On arriving at Port Howard, we landed on the short runway near the harbour, which is only occasionally used and is very close to Port Howard Lodge, our accommodation for our stay here. We were immediately greeted by our hosts, Sue and Wayne, who soon whisked us to the lodge to sort out our rooms and we were soon sitting in the lounge having Smoko (coffee, tea and cakes). It was not too long before the remainder of the group arrived, and soon settled in and caught up on the smoko, before we set off to walk to the quay, where they were sheep shearing, unfortunately by the time we arrived the generator had packed up, and they had had to stop work for the day, but we did see a few new plants, as well as our first Flightless Steamer Duck, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Crested Duck, Falkland Skua, Falkland Thrush and Black-throated Finch.

After lunch, we set off for Hill Cove, but once we left the main road the ground conditions were wet and difficult in places, causing us a few problems, especially the climb up over the ridge to the Gentoo colony. We did see several new species along the way though, including Rufous-chested Dotterel, Two-banded Plover, Falkland Snipe, Red-backed Hawk, Speckled Teal and Falkland Pipit.

Once at the penguin colony, we got extremely close views, finding one bird with a clam clamped to its upper mandible. The colony had split into three groups here, probably due to the availability of Diddle Dee, which in this habitat the birds strip to build their nests. Before returning, we made a short visit to the beach in the bay, where we found lots of Flightless Steamer Duck, as well as large numbers of Gentoo Penguin wading ashore, while Falkland Skua and Kelp Gull were amongst several other species, which included our first Turkey Vulture and King Shag. The journey back was less eventful and we arrived back at Port Howard in good time for an excellent dinner.

## Day 3

Sunday 7th November

### Port Howard and Fox Bay

We awoke to a dull, but far less windy morning, with Turkey Vultures flying about outside the windows. We headed off to Fox Bay after breakfast, at around 9 a.m., but we soon made several brief stops for species along the roadside, such as Red-backed Hawk and Black-throated Finch, as well as for our first White-tufted Grebe on a small river. While a stop was also made to view the wreckage of an Argentinean multi roll fighter aircraft, an Israeli built Dagger still with Israeli markings on it, which was shot down by a sea dart missile from a Sea Harrier.

We then stopped for quite a while, at the roadside fossil site, where material is extracted for road maintenance, several interesting finds were made and everyone found at least a few fossils of interest. Moving on we soon found Speckled Teal and our first Silver Teal on a small pool by the road.

Our next major stop was at Hawkshead Pond, where we went for a short walk before lunching in the shelter of the bank, here we found our first Flying Steamer Duck, Yellow-billed Pintail, Ruddy-headed Goose and Grass Wren, while other species included several Speckled Teal, White-tufted Grebe and Black-throated Finch.

Travelling on to Fox Bay we stopped to photograph the signs for the mine fields and several obliging Two-banded Plovers, before heading out to the point, where we found disappointingly that the usual Gentoo Penguin colony was not present this year, although ten obliging birds were present on the rocks and allowed close approach. Other species here, included both Rock and King Cormorant, as well as our first Dark-faced Ground Tyrant, while at least one pair of Red-backed Hawk were nesting on the cliffs, one of which attacked Wayne when he ventured too close to the cliff edge!

On our way back through the village we stopped near the small churchyard, which is now cut off by an Argentinean minefield, denying locals access to their relatives graves. Stops were also made for Upland Geese and Speckled Teal with young ones, while we'll also took a short detour to look for the endemic Yellow Orchid, which we found, but only in its vegetative state. Once back at Port Howard, which was occupied by the Argentinians, Wayne opened up his museum for us to view the numerous exhibits he has collected from the war, much of it left behind by the Argentinians, including a couple of field guns.

## Day 4

Monday 8th November

### Port Howard to Carcass Island

We got off from Port Howard, at around 9 a.m., with a few of us flying direct, while the majority went via Pebble Island.

After arriving on Carcass, one of the few larger islands free of rats, we soon started seeing new birds, such as Striated Caracara and Tussock Bird, while others species observed before reaching the lodge included Two-banded Plover and Black-throated Finch. We had also seen some bull Southern Elephant Seals on the beach, as we came into land. After settling into our comfortable new home, we walked the short distance to the beach, which provided us with numerous photographic opportunities with tame Tussock birds and Striated Caracara, along with Turkey Vulture and Kelp Gull as well as Upland, Kelp and Ruddy-headed Geese.

In the afternoon, we got a lift out to the Leopard Beach, seeing some Peale's Dolphin along the way. On reaching the beach area we were dropped off to have a look round, before walking the two miles back to the lodge. We stayed for quite a while in this superb area, much of it looking at the sea, as a Leopard Seal had been reported here the week before, unfortunately there was no sign of it during our visit. We also spent a while around the Gentoo Penguin colony, as well as spending time watching them surfing on to the beach from the sea, there were also quite a few Magellanic Penguins here, with their nesting burrows in the short grassland. These were our first, so we took the time to enjoy them. Others species seen included our first Snowy Sheathbill, but most of the usual ponds, which often hold a good variety of species, had already dried up, although the usual geese and a few Yellow-billed Teal were present. The walk back to the lodge was fairly quiet, but we did find several interesting plants, including the beautiful variable coloured Scurvy Grass, while nesting Striated Caracara and Upland Goose provided further interest.

## Day 5

Tuesday 9th November

### Carcass Island

A few birds were seen in and around the garden early in the morning, including Striated Caracara, Tussock Bird and Black-chinned Siskin. We caught the boat to West Point at around 9:30 a.m., but due to the rough seas we had to stay in the cabin until we reached the lee of Westpoint Island, we did see a number of Black Browed Albatross, as well as King and Rock Cormorant and our first Silver-grey Fulmar and some Commerson's Dolphins, but generally the trip was much poorer for seabirds than usual, partly due to not being able to get out on the deck and poor visibility from the cabin due to snow and sleet. As well as being unable, due to the high seas, to go along the west side of Westpoint Island with its stacks and the highest sea cliffs in the Falklands. On our arrival we were taken from the quay to the Homestead for a warm up and smoko, the hot drinks and fine selection of cakes being extremely welcome. There were also several birds around the sheltered garden, including a number of Black-chinned Siskin.

Later due to the poor weather we chose to be driven to the Rockhopper and Black-browed Albatross colony, where we were able to get extremely close views of both species without causing any disturbance, as they nest amongst the giant tussocks here, which offer excellent cover, providing everyone with superb photographic opportunities, as well as being able to watch the natural interaction between the birds. Other species seen here, included a very confiding Striated Caracara, Sedge Wren and some more Black-chinned Siskin, we also found a small endemic plant Skottsberg's Buttercup.

Once back on board the boat we journeyed back along the sheltered leeward side of the island and calmer weather allowed us to stay out on deck, which enabled us to find a few birds, including Snowy Sheathbill, Gentoo and Magellanic Penguin and our only Falkland Diving Petrel of the trip.

The highlight however, was a dozen or more Commerson's Dolphins, who followed the boat to ride in the bow waves, giving superb views for a long time as they accompanied us all the way back to Carcass Island.

## Day 6

Wednesday 10th November

### Carcass Island

Our excursion on this day was up to the north-west point of the island to look for Elephant Seals, leaving at around 9.30am, we got a lift with Rob to the end of the airfield, where after a short walk to a sandy beach we found several cow Elephant Seals with calves and just inland, we found a large bull, with some females laying in the dunes, while some Cobb's Wren were also found amongst the tussocks.

We then walked the short distance to the first of the three main pools, which held large numbers of Crested Duck and Yellow-billed Teal, while the second pool, held more of these species, as well as our first Chiloe Wigeon. The final pond was the best of all, with over a hundred Crested Duck and Yellow-billed Teal, while the beach was covered with birds, including hundreds of Kelp Gull and about 150 Dolphin Gull, as well as over a hundred plus South American Tern, along with Magellanic Penguin, Blackish Oystercatcher as well as the usual Kelp, Ruddy-headed and Upland Geese, with the nests of all three species being found. There were also Magellanic Oystercatchers with young and Elephant Seals, with some cows still suckling calves, and a huge bull. The arrow shaped leaves of Arrow-leaved Marsh Marigold were also much in evidence here, and we also spent some time studying the carcass of a Southern Right Whale.

Walking on until we reached the shelter of some large tussocks, where we could hear Elephant Seals calling behind us, we lunched out of the wind, although we were soon joined by the now customary cheeky Striated Caracara hoping for the usual titbits. Setting off on the walk back, we headed for the lower part of the ridge, but even this is a long steady climb. Little new was seen on the journey, but we did find our first Yellow Violet in flower, while mauve variety of Scurvy Grass was also seen. After arriving back we spent some time around the settlement, photographing the many obliging birds to be found here, while I walked back up the hill to successfully find Lady's Slipper, which although it looks like an orchid is actually a member of the *Scrophulariaceae*, foxglove (snapdragon) family.

## Day 7

Thursday 11th November

### Carcass Island to Pebble Island

A few things were seen around the lodge before we departed, including a Black-chinned Siskin, which was building a nest right outside our window, others species observed included Striated Caracara and Tussockbird, while on the way to the airstrip we saw Long-tailed Meadowlark and Black-faced Ground Tyrant. On take-off, Elephants Seals and a variety of the bird species we had seen yesterday were apparent on the beach. After both flights had arrived, we quickly settled into our new accommodation before taking lunch.

Later we headed off on a reasonably long walk to visit two pools, the small Elephant Beach pool and Big Pool, it was a pleasant walk and we saw several Two-banded Plover and Red-chested Dotterel along the way, as well as our first decent views of White-rumped Sandpiper, while the small pool also held several Chiloe Widgeon.

On reaching Big Pool we found our first Black-necked Swan, we also got close enough to photograph a White-cheeked Grebe with a chick on it's back. Other species here included Yellow-Billed Teal and Giant Petrel, while we also saw an odd plain looking Cormorant, which in the distance looks similar to a European Shag, obviously it was more likely to be one of the South American species, such as Neotropical Cormorant. It is extremely unusual to see any of the local Cormorant species on fresh water here, so we wanted a closer look, but unfortunately two people flushed it away across to the other side of the lake before we were able to scrutinize it.

Cutting through the sand dunes to Elephant Beach, although Elephant Seals no longer occur here, but it is the longest beach in the Falklands (along which they even land aeroplanes on occasions!). We followed the beach back to the small pool seeing a number of Giant Petrel and Flightless Steamer Duck offshore. On reaching the Beach Pool we got closer views of the Chiloe Widgeon and a few others species we'd already seen. Little else was seen on the journey back, but most of us continuing to the Settlement Beach, where we found Blackish Oystercatcher and some quite close Snowy Sheathbill, which were watched for some time, feeding amongst the kelp, while other species here included Rock Cormorant, Crested Duck and our first Black-crowned Night Heron, which was roosting under the pier.

## Day 8

Friday 12th November

### Pebble Island

Leaving around 9 am in drizzly weather, we headed off to visit the West end of the island, but soon stopped near First Mountain to visit the HMS Coventry Memorial, which is dedicated to the 20 crew who lost their lives a few miles offshore from here. As we travelled, we saw a number of birds, including several Two-banded Plover and Red-chested Dotterel etc, while at our next stop at No Name Bay we got distant views of the Giant Petrel colony, while also seeing Magellanic and Gentoo Penguin, Speckled Teal and lots of Flightless Steamer Duck, while enjoying our smoko.

Our next stop was another Gentoo Penguin colony for more photographs, while a Crested Caracara was also seen near here. Next we visited the memorial for the crew of the Argentinean Learjet, which was shot down here at 40,000 ft by a Sea Dart missile from HMS Exeter, with the loss of five crew, including Argentines' highest ranking officer to be killed in the war, Wing Commander de la Colina.

Our final outward stop was at Cape Coventry, for the large Rockhopper Penguin colony, amongst which we also found three Macaroni Penguins. Here we lunched, allowing us plenty of time to observe interactivity between the birds, while we also walked a short distance to see the Rockhoppers hopping their way up and down the steep cliffs to and from the sea. Some of these endearing little birds soon accepted our presence and walked right up to us, even pecking at people's feet and while here the weather improved considerably, this being much appreciated by the photographers.

Later, we headed inland to visit the largest Gentoo Penguin colony on the island, seeing a Red-backed Hawk along the way. We only stopped a short time here, as we were looking for a King Penguin, which had been seen here a couple of days previously, we eventually spotted it quite a distance away up the hill on it's own, so then drove up there to get reasonable views of it, a moulting juvenile. This is the largest of the regular Falkland Island Penguins, it was also our fifth penguin species of the day!

On our way back we had our first really good views of a group of Falkland Snipe, while we also drove up to the viewpoint, which enabled us to observe a female Red-backed Hawk sitting on her nest, while a fine male was perched close by. After a few more photographic stops, we returned to the lodge at about 5.15pm, allowing time for some of the group to walk down to the quay, where a couple of Snowy Sheathbill and four Black-crowned Night Heron were seen.

## Day 9

Saturday 13th November

### Pebble Island

Visiting the airfield, where Alan gave us a very informative talk about the successful SAS raid carried out here, which destroyed 11 Argentinean planes, including six Pucara ground attack aircraft and some T 34 Meteor reconnaissance planes, which could have compromised the impending landing in East Falkland. The raid was accompanied by a distracting bombardment from the Frigate HMS Broadsword and the County class Destroyer HMS Glamorgan, this shellfire being co-ordinated from the shore by Chris Brown, Royal Artillery 148 Battery 29 Commando.

We then headed by vehicle to Elephant Beach Pond, before following the beach on our way to the eastern end of the island, a large flock of White-rumped Sandpiper were found here, as well as the usual Giant Petrel and Flightless Steamer Duck. We then visited Quak and Bett's Ponds, where we stopped for smoko, and here in spite of a very strong wind we got good views of our first Silvery Grebe, as well as Silver Teal and White-tufted Grebe.

Moving on via Green Pond to Swan Pond we found Black-necked Swans, and several other species before heading out to Cape Tamar to look for Southern Sea Lions finding several hauled out on the rocks below the cliff, this group included a very nice bull and several of the group climbed down to get better photographs of it. The strong wind was also pushing good numbers of seabirds in close to the shore, with several Black-browed Albatross and good numbers of Giant Petrel and both species of Cormorant.

We then moved on towards Cape Evans, finding another very large and smart looking King Penguin in the Bay. Continuing to the Cape we spent some time watching the colonies of breeding Rockhopper Penguin and King Cormorant, along with the antics of an assortment of egg and chick stealers, such as Falkland Skua, Snowy Sheathbill and Dolphin and Kelp Gulls, with the Skuas being particularly skilled at it. We lunched here, allowing us more time for photography, with a leucistic Rockhopper Penguin attracting much of the attention.

On our way back we found the King Penguin again, which had moved quite a distance up on to the heath since previous sighting and this time it was much closer, allowing some photographs to be taken. We then visited the beach area where we had found some interesting plants on the small cliff on previous visits and species located included Wild Celery and our first sighting of the native Bead Plant. On our journey back we visited several more pools, some of them for the second time, this provided us with some very good photographic opportunities, particularly of some close, Silvery Grebe on Swan Pool, while other species seen at the various stops included Chiloe Widgeon and our closest views yet of Yellow-billed Pintail. Reaching Big Pond again, we got extremely close views of a very photogenic White-tufted Grebe with a chick on its back, in one of the narrow channels flowing into the pond.

The highlight of the day however, was around the other side of the pond near the point where we had seen the odd Cormorant a few days before. Here, we found two Neotropical Cormorants, which we photographed and later confirmed as the first record of this species in the Falkland Islands! On our return, a quick visit to the quay at the settlement provided us with four Black-crowned Night Herons, two adults and two juveniles, while five Blackish Oystercatcher and several more Snowy Sheathbill were seen

## Day 10

Sunday 14th November

### Pebble Island to Sea Lion Island

This was another transfer day, with the first part of the group travelling direct to Sea Lion Island, while the remainder of us went via Stanley to refuel. Those of us who left later went to search for a Mockingbird, which had been reported but unfortunately, it couldn't be found, although we did find Black-chinned Siskin, Long-tailed Meadowlark and several other species. By the time we reached Sea Lion it was almost lunch time and the earlier contingent had already been out to visit the Gentoo Penguin colony, as well as visiting the Elephant Seals on the beach, where Reg had also managed to see three Killer Whales offshore!

After lunch, Jenny, who runs the lodge here, kindly took us out for a tour of the island in the Land Rovers. First we visited Tussock Pool, where we walked through the tussock grass to the beach, seeing Black-crowned Night Heron and getting incredibly close views of Falkland Snipe, while Blackish Oystercatcher, Magellanic Penguin and several species of ducks were seen. Elephant Seal and Sea Lion were seen in the dunes or on the beach, while other species here included three Cobb's Wren and some Tussock Birds. Moving on to the beach at East Loafers, we found more Elephant Seal and the tamest bull Sea Lion I had ever encountered, a very ancient gnarled animal, which allowed incredibly close approach of the photographers. Further stops were made as we drove up the island for species such as Crested Caracara Falkland Snipe and several lots of Two-banded Plover and Red-chested Dotterel. We then headed for the HMS Sheffield Memorial, as this is the nearest point of land to where she sank 30 miles out to sea with the loss of 20 lives. There is a Rockhopper Penguin colony close to the memorial now. Here after a few reflective minutes we moved a little further along the coast to visit more Rockhopper Penguins and a colony of King Cormorants, along with their attendant scavengers, such as Falkland Skua and Snowy Sheathbill.

Heading back, we stopped at Long Pond, where we saw Silver Teal and had very close views of Silvery Grebe. Returning beyond the lodge, we visited the North Beach, where we got very close views of Elephant Seals, including some large bulls, while we also obtained our first close views of South American Terns. Driving back past the Gentoo colony, we visited the South Beach, where we spent some time observing the antics of the bull Elephant Seals, three night Heron flew past while we were here, as well as a pair of Blackish Oystercatcher. After an excellent dinner it was extremely pleasant to lie in bed, surrounded by the calls of Magellanic Penguin, which become vocal at night.

## Day 11

Monday 15th November

### Sea Lion Island

No-one ventured out early and we did not leave until after the 9:30 a.m. flight out to Stanley as Jenny had kindly offered to run us up to the far end of the island to Beaver Pond, so named because Beaver float planes used to land here.

The wind was extremely strong, but once afoot we wandered very carefully up the side of the pond through the largest Magellanic Penguin colony we had encountered so far, to enable us to visit the adjoining boulder beach where good numbers of Kelp Gull, Dolphin Gull and South American Tern were present. We also found the nest of a Magellanic Oystercatcher, while several Cobb's Wrens were scuttling about amongst the boulders. Here we also found the native Stonecrop *Crassula moschata*.

Cutting across the island to follow the north coast to enable us to lunch at the secluded harbour we passed lots of interest on the way, including the now usual Red-chested Dotterel, and Two-banded Plover, while we also stopped to photograph several species such as Turkey Vulture, Falkland Pipit and Black-throated Finch. As we neared the tussock area close to the landing bay there was an Elephant Seal on the beach and in the nearby tussock area we found a couple of very obliging Sedge Wren delivering their vigorous songs from the tops of tussock tufts. Eventually finding the narrow path through the tussocks, we lunched at the landing bay, where we were able to watch the nesting Rock Cormorant across a very narrow rocky inlet. A tame Tussock Bird appeared looking for titbits, while we also saw Cobb's Wren and got the opportunity to photograph a Dark-faced Ground Tyrant. From this point, the group headed off in different directions, seeing a variety of species on the final walk back, with Max, Don and Reg seeing a male Killer Whale off the north coast, while several others went via Long Pond, getting close views of eleven Silvery Grebe, as well as Falkland, Snipe and a couple of Silver Teal.

The isolated lodge garden area held a number of Black-chinned Siskin and Cobb's Wren, while near here we watched a pair of Striated Caracara attempting to take a Magellanic Oystercatcher chick, with the incredibly brave parent birds eventually, managing to drive them away. Several plants were found in the adjoining wet valley, including the rare local form of Native Yellow Violet which is known as Fuegian Violet, differing in having a rounder leaf and a longer lower petal, our first Vanilla Daisy was also found here.

## Day 12

Tuesday 16th November

### Sea Lion Island

None of us were out before breakfast, so we set off around 9 a.m., to visit the eastern end of the island, heading first to the old hide in the dunes, which used to overlook the Giant Petrel colony, but their colony had moved, so we crept through the dunes in front of the hide to get a vantage point overlooking the colony, which gave us reasonable views and photographic opportunities and we sat here pleasantly out of the wind for a considerable time.

Heading back, we skirted the main shallow pool, finding sixteen Brown-hooded Gulls, seventeen White-rumped Sandpipers and eleven Snowy Sheathbills, along with some Dolphin Gulls, South American Tern, Chiloe Wigeon and several other species. On reaching the Southern shore a distant Killer Whale was spotted, which proved to be one of two, but we then found a large male, much closer to the shore, which created some excitement for a little while. Following the beach there were many Two-banded Plovers with chicks of varying ages, while many of the adults wore colouring combinations as part of a local study. Several of the Magellanic Oystercatcher also had young. Continuing along the beach another really good find were two Barn Swallows, which are rare vagrants here, and it was pitiful in some ways watching them trying to find food at low level due to the extremely windy conditions, while other species here included Dark-faced Ground Tyrant, and several Flightless Steamer Ducks with ducklings. We spent some time here, searching the sea to further views of the Orca but to no avail, while a group of Elephant Seals provided us with little action as they lay close by in a sleeping heap.

Some of the group then returned to lunch, while others picnicked and later did their own thing with some getting a lift west with Jenny to revisit some of yesterday's areas, seeing nothing new, although a good variety of the now more and more familiar species were seen. I traipsed off across the bog searching for Dog Orchid and Short-eared Owl, finding several of the first just coming into flower, but seeing nothing of the latter which has been unusually difficult to see on the island this year.

## Day 13

Wednesday 17th November

### Sea Lion Island to Stanley

Due to our flights being quite late, we were able to have a leisurely breakfast before venturing out for a couple of hours before lunchtime flights. Everyone set out for the eastern end of the island. Some of us first headed to the boggy area to look for Dog Orchid, where we eventually found a couple out in full flower, this being an unusually early date to this species. The Gentoo Penguin colony and the Elephant Seals were also visited again, where some of us watched the local scientists taking blood samples from some of the pups.

Lots of photographs were also taken of now familiar species, while a Two-banded Plovers nest was found with three eggs. Other species observed, included Blackish Oystercatcher, South American Tern, Dolphin Gull, Rufus headed Goose and Chiloe Wigeon, while some of those on the later flight also saw the two Barn Swallows again, as well as three Killer Whales.

Those on the earlier flight lunched in Stanley, while the rest took a picnic lunch giving them more time to explore Seal Lion Island, but we all had plenty of time to have a look around Stanley later. With some visiting the cathedral and museum as well as the war memorials, while shopping took precedence for many, with a wide variety of wildlife stamps from the local post office being particularly popular, some got caught out however as a number of the establishments now close at 4 p.m. Later we had an excellent dinner at the Malvina Hotel, where a book launch was taking place centred around the new paintings commissioned for the newly opened extension.

## Day 14

Thursday 18th November

### Volunteer Point

Due to the arrival of a cruise ship overnight, our planned early start was delayed to avoid the hordes leaving at first light to Volunteer Point, where there is a King Penguin breeding colony. Leaving at around 10:30 a.m., we had an interesting and informative journey with our local driver guides.

On reaching the farm settlement we then had a one on the half-hour drive out to the point, this is quite a damp area with numerous routes, where vehicles frequently get stuck, so recent local knowledge is invaluable. As we neared the old farmhouse close to the point we passed 27 vehicles leaving the site and by the time we arrived we had the entire area to ourselves. Unfortunately after a while, the weather deteriorated somewhat, but by then we had numerous good photographs of the endearing King Penguins, many of the fluffy young ones walking right up to us begging in anticipation of food.

Crossing this vast area of Oceanic Heath, provided us with many of the species typical of this habitat, such as Red-chested Dotterel, Two-banded Plover, Falkland Snipe, Falkland Pipit and Long-tailed Meadow Lark.

There is also a very large Gentoo Penguin colony here, as well as good numbers of Magellanic Penguin, while the small pools near to the visitor hut provided other species such as Snowy Sheathbill, Chiloe Wigeon and White-rumped Sandpiper. On our journey back, we stopped at the site of a shot down helicopter, as well as stopping to photograph the endemic Falkland Woolly Ragwort.

## Day 15

Friday 19th November

### Stanley Pelagic Trip & Flight Back

Leaving just after nine o'clock, we travelled the short distance to the harbour to begin our pelagic trip out to the area of ocean beyond Kidney Island, there was quite a swell and once we went out of the lee of the of the islands was quite bumpy. Once the chum started going over board, we were soon joined by Giant Petrel and Black-browed Albatross, but he took some time to draw them and a few Sooty Shearwaters in close, but with perseverance we got them very close and eventually a few other species appeared such as White-chinned Petrel and Wilson's Petrel. We headed for the cliffs, where we got fairly close to some Rockhopper Penguin and some King Cormorant, while a couple of Commerson's Dolphins also appeared in a short while. We then headed to the lee of Kidney Island, where we got some very close views of Sea Lions playing in the very shallow water. Crossing to the coast of West Falkland, to look for more dolphins, we then followed it back close to the shore getting close views of the famous beach at Gypsy Cove, which is surrounded by a minefield. While later we detoured to get closer views of the Lady Elizabeth, a striking hulk, which was towed in 1936, we also saw the less spectacular remains of the Charles Cooper and American wooden deep water merchant ship.

After a much-needed warm up and lunch the afternoon was free, with many of the group visiting Stanley Museum, as well as doing some last-minute shopping stop. Our return flight from Mount Pleasant was late a late one, but with an hour or more drive to the airport and the required early check, we had to leave Stanley early evening. Once away, we saw a number of now extremely familiar birds, with lots of Upland Geese, while along the road side the abundant heads of Pale Maiden seemed to be waving a farewell to us in the light breeze, as the evening light faded and provided us with our most spectacular sunset so far. The queuing and airport formalities were far quicker and less burdensome than on some previous visits and once away we made good time to Ascension Island, where our refuelling and repair stop gave us time for a leg stretch. Several distant birds were also seen here, including Ascension Island Frigate and Masked Booby. Most of us then managed at least some sleep on the remainder of the journey. On our late 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!

## Receive our e-newsletter

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

## Naturetrek Facebook

We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans. Setting up a personal profile at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!

## Species Lists

## Birds

	Common name	Scientific name	November														
			6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
1	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>								1	1					700+	
2	Gentoo Penguin	<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>	1000c	10	500+	1				1000+		500+	400+	500+	500+	1400+	
3	Rockhopper Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>				500+				500+	600+	200c	200c				30+
4	Macaroni Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>								3							
5	Magellanic Penguin	<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>			30c	16	6	1	10	20+	80+	150c	70+	20+	20+	6	
6	White-tufted Grebe	<i>Rollandia rolland</i>		6				6		21							
7	Silvery Grebe	<i>Podiceps occipitalis</i>								30	8	11					
8	Black-browed Albatross	<i>Diomedea melanophris</i>		1	8	1000+	15	5		30+	200+	10	9	12		40c	
9	Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	15	8	10	30c	4	20+	150+	20+	15	30c	70+	8	12	30+	
10	White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>															2
11	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>															50+
12	Wilson's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>															2
13	Falkland Diving Petrel	<i>Pelecanooides urinatrix berard</i>				1											
14	Rock Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>	30+	8	20c	40c	8	20c	20+	30+	30+	20+	30c	20+	4	40c	
15	Imperial Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i>	8	10	12	2			700+	500+	200+		200+				
16	Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>						1	4	4	5	11	16				
17	Black-necked Swan	<i>Cygnus melancoryphus</i>						7		10							
18	Ruddy-headed Goose	<i>Chloephaga rubidiceps</i>		6	30c	4	40+	20+	15	14	8	6	8	14	24		
19	Upland Goose	<i>Chloephaga picta</i>	100+	100+	200+	100+	100+	60+	250+	100+	150+	100c	70+	60+	50+	30c	
20	Kelp Goose	<i>Chloephaga hybrida</i>	2	6	20+	20+	30c	30+	20+	12	20+	30c	20+	7	6	6	
21	Crested Duck	<i>Lophonetta specularioides</i>	5	10	9		150c	60+	34	9	30+	25c	15	4	9		
22	Falkland Flightless Steamer Duck	<i>Tachyeres brachydactyla</i>	150+	71	6	10	100+	100+	50+	30c	40c	20+	20+	8	8	11	
23	Flying Steamer Duck	<i>Tachyeres patachonicus</i>		8				2	20+	8	2						
24	Speckled Teal	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>	7	20+	30c		60c	20+	4	40+	12	6	4	4	9	8	
25	Chiloe Wigeon	<i>Anas sibilatrix</i>					4	7		11			7	9	4		
26	Yellow-billed Pintail	<i>Anas georgica</i>		2						7							
27	Silver Teal	<i>Anas versicolor</i>		5						5	1	2					
28	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	5	10	12	9	6	16	8	10	15	20c	10	7	10	6	
29	Red-backed Hawk	<i>Buteo polyosoma</i>	1	3			1		3	1							

	Common name	Scientific name	November													
			6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
30	Striated Caracara	<i>Phalacrocorax australis</i>			15	20c	25c	12			3	8	7	5		
31	Crested Caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>		2					1		1	1				
32	Blackish Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ater</i>		1	2	2	4	2	2	5	2	2		2		
33	Magellanic Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus leucopodus</i>	10	8	6	4	30c	20+	30+	40+	30+	30+	12	8	4	5
34	Two-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius falklandicus</i>	10	12	3	2	2	8	20+	15	12	12	20+	14		
35	Rufous-chested Dotterel	<i>Charadrius modestus</i>	12	8				4	14	1	25+	20c	6	20+		
36	Magellanic Snipe	<i>Gallinago paraguaiiae</i>	1	2				1	4	1	12	10	4	3	2	
37	White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>		3				8		50c			17	14		
38	Snowy Sheathbill	<i>Chionis alba</i>			3	2	1	21	3	20c	6	12	3	9		
39	Antarctic Skua	<i>Catharacta antarctica</i>	6	2		2	12	7	12	12	20+	20+	12	10	8	6
40	Dolphin Gull	<i>Larus scoresbii</i>					120+		6	20c	20c	100+	14	3		
41	Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	50+	40+	30c	50+	200+	200+	30+	30+	30+	150+	30+	20+	20c	20+
42	Brown-hooded Gull	<i>Larus maculipennis</i>		2									10			
43	South American Tern	<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>	20+		12	20c	80+	4	1	5	5	100c	16	6	6	20c
44	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>											2	2		
45	Tussock-bird	<i>Cinclodes antarcticus</i>			30+	6	30c	10			20+	40+	30+			
46	Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola macloviana</i>			4	1	4	4	7	4	8	10	7			
47	Falkland Pipit	<i>Anthus correndera</i>	2	2			1	2	4	4	2	4	6		3	
48	Grass Wren	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>		1		1						2	2	5		
49	House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>			2	2	5				4	8	3	3		
50	Falkland Thrush	<i>Turdus falklandii</i>	13	5	20+	30+	20+	8	10	15	12	30+	20+	6	25c	1
51	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	10											50c	20c	6
52	Black-chinned Siskin	<i>Carduelis barbatus</i>			6	20+	6	3			5	8	10			
53	Black-throated Finch	<i>Melanodera melanodera</i>	10	40+	8		16	8	20+	10	15	20+	12	8	20c	
54	Long-tailed Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella loyca</i>	18	20c	6	4	8	6	10	29c	8			2	9	2

## Cetaceans

1	Killer Whale	<i>Occinus orca</i>									3	1	3	3		
2	Peale's Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus australis</i>			2											
3	Commerson's Dolphin	<i>Cephalorhynchus</i>				18	2				2					
4	Southern Sea Lion	<i>Otaria flavescens</i>				7				15	6					
5	Southern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirouga leonina</i>					25c	6			100c	50+	50+	30c	30c	