

# ATLANTIC ODYSSEY TOUR REPORT 2024

28 March - 30 April 2024

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The Atlantic Odyssey of 2024 was an epic journey from Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego via South Georgia, ultra-remote Gough Island, the main Tristan da Cunha island group, Saint Helena and Ascension Island to the Cape Verde Islands! It is certainly one of the two greatest seabird voyages on Earth, rivalled only by the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand and Australia cruise (which produces a smaller number of seabird species overall but even more tubenoses). You only have to take a look at the results of the 2024 expedition to see how true that is. An almost incredible seabird extravaganza with some rarely observed landbirds thrown in.

Our expedition commenced at the southernmost city in Argentina, Ushuaia. Here we boarded Oceanwide Expedition's newest flagship, *MV Hondius* and after finding our cabins met up with those lucky group members who had already participated in the linking cruise to the Antarctic Peninsula. It was great to hear about those wonderful Snow and Antarctic Petrels, Adelie Penguins and Antarctic Shags, not to mention the extraordinary scenery of Antarctica. Those of us joining the Odyssey today envied their splendid Emperor Penguin sightings! Late-season Antarctic cruises definitely offer the best chances for encountering these sought-after creatures.

Strong winds delayed our departure overnight, so unusually we had an entire day to admire the magnificent scenery of the Beagle Channel with snow-clad peaks and glaciers towering above the greys, browns and greens of the lower slopes and the blue-grey waters of the channel itself. The area is sparsely inhabited and the scene cannot have changed that much since Captain Fitzroy and Charles Darwin explored the area in late 1833 and early 1834.

Birdlife was surprisingly varied, including no fewer than five Andean Condors. It was certainly weird to watch these huge birds from a large ship! Other landbirds and coastal species included Fuegian (or Flightless) Steamer Duck, Kelp Goose, Crested Duck, Blackish Oystercatcher, South American Tern, Dolphin and Kelp Gulls, Turkey Vulture, Crested and Chimango Caracaras, Neotropical Cormorant and Imperial and Rock Shags.

Pelagic seabirds soon became numerous and diverse, especially once we left the Beagle Channel proper and entered more open waters en route to Isla de los Estados (Staten Island). They included hordes of Black-browed Albatrosses as well as Chilean and 'Falkland' Skuas, Magellanic Penguin, 'Fuegian' Storm Petrel, huge Snowy (or Wandering) and Southern Royal Albatrosses, Southern and Northern Giant Petrels, Cape Petrel, the handsome Blue Petrel, Slender-billed Prion, White-chinned Petrel and Sooty and Great Shearwaters. 20 Southern (or Antarctic) Fulmars was a good number for this area and two Westland Petrels were a bonus. Sadly, as is becoming all too usual, we only had a single Magellanic Diving Petrel. In many parts of its range, this species is in

steep decline owing to predation by escaped American Mink. 30 years ago one could see ten or twenty or more during a day in the channel!

We also enjoyed a great day for cetaceans with no fewer than 15 Sei Whales, an Antarctic Minke Whale, two Humpback Whales and great encounters with both Peale's and Dusky Dolphins. South American Fur Seals and South American Sealions added to the mammal mix.

It is a voyage of three full days from the southern tip of South America to the remote subantarctic island of South Georgia, but for birders, the journey is simply wonderful! An almost endless 'pelagic' with always the chance for a new addition at any time. As well as almost all the seabirds we encountered in the Beagle Channel and beyond, we came across Grey-headed Albatross, the graceful Light-mantled (Sooty) Albatross, small numbers of King, Macaroni and Southern Rockhopper Penguins far from land, Wilson's and Black-bellied Storm Petrels, our first tiny Grey-backed Storm Petrel, Antarctic and Fairy Prions, Kerguelen, Soft-plumaged and Grey Petrels, and South Georgia (or Georgian) and Common Diving Petrels. We passed the wild, storm-tossed Shag Rocks on the third day and they lived up to their name with around 2000 South Georgia Shags present. Even Snowy Sheathbill went on the list unexpectedly early as one arrived on the ship and stayed with us for over 24 hours! Plenty of Fin Whales and striking Hourglass Dolphins were the only cetaceans recorded.

With 'bird flu' having reached the Subantarctic and even Antarctica by way of migratory birds like skuas, we had been worried that landings (as opposed to zodiac cruises) in South Georgia might be nigh on impossible but happily for us the blanket restrictions were being steadily lifted and our first landing was at a large King Penguin colony at Fortuna Bay. 20,000 or more King Penguins were present on the grassy plain surrounded by icy peaks and of course, the mass of birds at the colony itself, including both adults and well-grown young (initially described as a separate species: 'Woolly Penguin') was hugely impressive. There was constant traffic of arriving and departing adults to the nearby beach and here we could enjoy the antics of groups climbing onto the ice floes, jumping out of the surf or wading in to begin their feeding forays.

Most of the Southern Elephant Seals, even the young 'weaners' had already gone to sea but we found a few of these huge creatures near to our landing site. Antarctic Fur Seals were everywhere and the pups were well-grown and quite feisty, chasing each other around in mock fights or even challenging the human invaders in their world. Watchful Northern and Southern Giant Petrels kept a close eye on the young fur seals at the beach, hoping for a sickly individual or a premature death. 'Subantarctic' Skuas patrolled the penguin colony, looking for an exposed egg or a sick chick and a low cliff hosted a Light-mantled Albatross nest with an adult and a fluffy chick. It was gratifying to see that the endemic South Georgia Pipit was easy to find once more, following a dramatic bounce-back in numbers after a successful rat eradication campaign.

An afternoon zodiac cruise around the old whaling stations at Leith Harbour was followed the next morning by a landing at Grytviken, the tiny administrative centre on South Georgia and home to its largest disused whaling station. Here, we enjoyed the traditional whisky toast at Ernest Shackleton's grave, admired a good number of Southern Elephant Seals and Antarctic Terns and yet more pipits and had time to visit the church, museum and shop.

During the afternoon we landed at Godhul, a sheltered bay not far from Grytviken. Lots of small icebergs and 'bergy bits' were present and we enjoyed watching the antics of the Gentoo Penguins as they struggled to get up on the ice, only to leap or slide off again! Lots of endearing Antarctic Fur

Seal pups added to the general chaos, especially when they tried hauling out on the same ice as the penguins, causing a real panic! Our first 'South Georgia' Pintails added to the enjoyment.

We sailed overnight to Drygalski Fjord in far southeastern South Georgia. Our passage up the length of this narrow waterway, hemmed in by towering icy peaks and glaciers, was truly spectacular and a fitting finale to our time at South Georgia. Sometimes the fjord hosts a Snow Petrel or two, but we were not to be lucky and had to make do with Weddell Seals, a species more usually encountered in Antarctica but with a toehold on South Georgia. Snowy Sheathbills were numerous both here and at Cooper Bay, with no fewer than 182 recorded!

An exploration of Cooper Bay by ship and by zodiac turned up huge numbers of Chinstrap, Macaroni, Gentoo and King Penguins, as well as a Southern Right Whale. Then it was time to say farewell to this wonderful island and head for even more remote Gough Island situated far to the northeast.

Our multi-day pelagic up to Gough was another seabird extravaganza. Most of the species we had encountered between South America and South Georgia were still present and as we worked our way northwards we started to encounter new birds. Indeed the numbers of some species, such as Grey-backed Storm Petrel, were greater.

Handsome Spectacled Petrels, Tristan, Sooty, Atlantic Yellow-nosed and Shy Albatrosses, Broad-billed and MacGillivray's Prions, Subantarctic Shearwaters and 'Tristan' Skuas appeared when we were still one or two days out from Gough, as did 'Gough' Storm Petrels, a white-bellied stormie that otherwise looks like a Black-bellied Storm Petrel but which may represent a distinct species. In addition, smart Atlantic Petrels and beautiful White-headed Petrels started to appear even on our first full day at sea after leaving South Georgia with Great-winged Petrels joining the following day. What truly fantastic days these were!

We had an 'interesting' day early on with thick fog and large icebergs looming suddenly out of the murk. No wonder we went so slowly, even with modern radar. The atmosphere was quite 'Titanic' at times.

Eventually, the wild, cliff-girt island of Gough appeared, rising from mid-Atlantic like a lost world. The only regular inhabitants here are the staff of the South African-operated weather station, joined from time to time by biologists studying Gough's wildlife. Landings by visitors are never permitted, so we had to make do with a zodiac cruise under the spectacular cliffs. Northern Rockhopper Penguins with the fantastic 'hairstyle' were numerous and indeed we counted at least 5,000. We could even get relatively close in spite of a pronounced swell. In spite of a lot of trying, no Gough Moorhens could be located and we learned later that there are reports that the population has been hugely reduced by the birds eating poison baits during the tragically failed attempt to remove the 'albatross-eating mice' from the island. Thanks to our guide Eduardo, who had visited Gough before, we located a group of six Gough Finches but they were distant and elusive, occasionally flying up from the tussock grass and then landing on various rocks before quickly vanishing back into the grass. They flew from one area to another about seven or eight times but they were hard to spot against the slopes and sadly one or two members of every birding group on board failed to get onto them.

It was a relatively short voyage from Gough to the main Tristan da Cunha group of islands and the birdlife changed only a little. The most exciting turn-up was the first 'Inaccessible Island' Storm

Petrels (a potential split from White-bellied). This interesting form was to prove fairly common among the Tristan group and we even saw some as far north as the approaches to St Helena.

Nightingale was the first island in the main Tristan group that we reached. Almost as 'inaccessible' as the famous Inaccessible Island to the north, we were not expecting to land and indeed we could not owing to the high swell. Lots of Great Shearwaters were gathered offshore and we also came across our first Cory's Shearwaters, but even a zodiac cruise was considered impracticable owing to the swell hitting the island from all points of the compass.

We moved on to Inaccessible where we could soon see why landings were so difficult. There was really only one spot, at the eastern end of the island, where a landing could be attempted during unusually calm weather. Still, it was considered that it might be possible the next morning so the decision was taken to sail over to Tristan da Cunha, register with the authorities, take more islanders on board (we already had one who joined at Ushuaia) and then sail back to Inaccessible. We were soon approaching the huge volcanic cone of Tristan, then anchoring off the rather grandly named settlement of Edinburgh of the Seven Seas and then getting back to Inaccessible just as the sun set.

Hopes were high on board that the sea was calm enough for a landing on Inaccessible. We were all briefed on what to expect and at dawn the next morning we were ready to board the zodiacs when our hopes were flattened by the announcement that the advance party had found the swell and surf too great for a landing attempt! So close and yet so far! We were just a few hundred metres from those Inaccessible Island Rails!

So there was nothing to do but return to Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, disembark at the tiny harbour and commence our exploration of Tristan da Cunha. Tristan does claim to be the most remote inhabited island on Earth and it is likely true. This tiny outpost of what was once the British Empire has everything in miniature; government offices, church, shops, bar, houses, roads, boats the lot.

Most of us took taxis out of town so that we could have more time to look for the local wildlife. Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses constantly patrolled the steep, largely scrub and grass-covered volcanic slopes, but our main quarry here was Gough Moorhen (introduced to Tristan after the endemic Tristan Moorhen was wiped out) and the nominate form of the Tristan Thrush. After a lot of scanning and a lot of hearing birds calling from the vegetation, several were sighted in the distance. After climbing up the steep grassy slopes most of us had good views and those who went higher still could even take good photos. The thrush was a very different matter. We had been warned that most of the surviving population occurred high up on the volcano, so it was a relief when a couple of pairs flew around over the bushes and low trees not too far above our elevation.

On our last day in the Tristan group we returned once more to Inaccessible and this time we had more luck. The wind had gone round into the north and the swell had diminished enough to permit a zodiac cruise along the south side of the island. Hooray! A real highlight was seeing a fair number of the *gordoni* form of the Tristan Thrush at sea level, including one very close individual that fed rather like a Turnstone on the wave-swept rocks. We also watched numerous Subantarctic Fur Seals at close range and a number of Inaccessible Island Finches feeding along the shoreline. We kept scanning the tussock grass for the hoped-for Inaccessible Islands Rail but there was no sign of one.

We had to return to Tristan to drop off our friendly islanders and pick up a few more who needed a lift to the nearest airport on St Helena. A Shepherd's Beaked Whale was a surprise find and we also came across two pods of Short-finned Pilot Whales numbering 150 individuals. At dusk, a spectacular concentration of perhaps 5000 Great-winged Petrels could be observed off the south coast of the island.

It was another long haul from Tristan da Cunha to famous St Helena, but now the number of seabirds was greatly diminished and birding became much tougher. Sometimes hours passed without a bird as we moved into tropical seas. Nonetheless, we encountered a series of new species including migrating Arctic Terns, Long-tailed Jaegers and Leach's Storm Petrels, Red-billed Tropicbirds, 'St Helena' Storm Petrels and Bulwer's Petrels. Cetaceans included Dwarf Sperm Whale, Pantropical Spotted Dolphin and Common Bottlenose Dolphin.

As we approached St Helena we started to see the lovely White Tern, Black Noddy, Brown Noddy (although we had seen two off Nightingale earlier), Sooty Tern, Parasitic Jaeger (or Arctic Skua) and Red-footed and Masked Boobies. Most surprising was an immature Ascension Frigatebird which was an unexpected bonus for those disembarking at St Helena!

St Helena is of course famous as the last home of Emperor Napoleon, following his exile to the island after his defeat at Waterloo. We made the required pilgrimage to Longwood House, where he spent the last 6 years of his life, and his nearby grave (where he was first interred before being taken back to France). It was fascinating to visit both the memorabilia-filled house and the grave, both of which are lovingly looked after by the French government. A romantic figure, yet someone whose wars killed three million men...

St Helena is surprisingly verdant in its high interior but the outer rim of the island is extremely arid. Lots of Red-billed Tropicbirds nest on the cliffs while White Terns nest in trees all over the island, even in the middle of Georgetown. As the local boat was under repair, we made a zodiac cruise to the south end of the island, encountering our first Brown Boobies and numerous nesting noddies of both species. 'St Helena' Storm Petrels (an upcoming split from Band-rumped Storm Petrel) gave great views.

Sadly, most of the landbirds on St Helena these days are introductions and these include Rock Dove, Zebra Dove, Common Myna, Red Fody, Java Sparrow, Common Waxbill and Yellow Canary. Mercifully one of the native endemics still survives, and in good numbers. The attractive St Helena Plover or Wirebird (the local name derives from its long legs) now occurs in good numbers again in the grassy areas on the interior plateau and indeed has been reclassified from Critically Endangered to Vulnerable owing to conservation efforts that have rapidly restored its population. We greatly enjoyed our encounters with them and even found a nest with eggs.

A real highlight of St Helena was the encounters with huge Whale Sharks, some of which came to the surface right beside *Hondius* both in the daytime and at night. We also encountered our first Rough-toothed Dolphins.

After losing about a quarter of the *Hondius*'s passengers who disembarked at St Helena and took the weekly flight to Johannesburg, we 'remainers' headed north towards Ascension Island.

Seabirding continued to be thin but as we neared the island we started to see more Ascension Frigatebirds, a species that only breeds at Ascension and which only rarely occurs outside a sea area that broadly surrounds the island. Other welcome additions included South Polar Skua and

those who missed a couple south of Gough caught up on White-faced Storm Petrel. New cetaceans included Cuvier's Beaked Whale.

Sadly the swell conditions at Ascension were not calm enough to permit a landing, or, we speculated, the authorities were reluctant to let us ashore on this military base island shared by the UK and the US. Who knows? We could, however, circumnavigate the island a couple of times and pass right next to Botswain Bird Island where the entire population of Ascension Frigatebirds nest. Hundreds hung in the air above *Hondius* as we passed close by the rock and we counted around 1200 in the general area! We also recorded a dozen smart White-tailed Tropicbirds as well as more Red-billed Tropicbirds and huge numbers of Masked Boobies.

Another long sea crossing took us to the Cape Verde Islands. We celebrated the crossing of the Equator in traditional style, being forced to abase ourselves before King Neptune and his queen. His willing retainers covered us in slops so we had to cleanse ourselves thoroughly as the ritual requires!

There were still a lot of seabirds around during our first day or two out of Ascension, but now we were running out of new birds. The only addition was Scopoli's Shearwater, but no one in our group managed to see this bonus bird. Cetaceans were a different matter and new species included huge Sperm Whales, Blainville's Beaked Whale, Risso's Dolphin and some huge pods of rare Clymene Dolphins. The weirdest observation involved a migrating Common Swift that followed *Hondius* for a couple of hours as we sailed north-northwest. Was it taking a huge shortcut from SW Africa or had it been blown out to sea?

On the final morning of this epic voyage, we were close to Santiago Island in the Cape Verde Islands with plenty of Cape Verde Shearwaters to welcome us to the islands as well as small numbers of Boyd's (or Cape Verde) Shearwaters and Fea's (or Cape Verde) Petrels, plus a couple of Cape Verde Storm Petrels.

Arriving at the port of Praia and seeing a large town for the first time in over a month came as a bit of a culture shock! Soon it was time to leave *Hondius* behind, and say farewell to her wonderful crew and expedition staff, but not before we added a couple of endemic Cape Verde land birds in the form of Cape Verde Swift and Iago (or Cape Verde) Sparrow.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g., it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list follow Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P. (Eds). **2024. IOC World Bird List (v14.1)**.

Includes species recorded in the Ushuaia town area shortly prior to departure and species recorded at Praia port upon arrival in the Cape Verde Islands.

## BIRDS

**Flying Steamer Duck** ♦ *Tachyeres patagonicus* Four at Ushuaia.

**Fuegian (or Flightless) Steamer Duck** ♦ *Tachyeres pteneres* A pair in the Beagle Channel.

**Upland Goose** ♦ *Chloephaga picta* Common at Ushuaia.

**Kelp Goose** ♦ *Chloephaga hybrida* Common at Ushuaia and along the Beagle Channel.

**Crested Duck** *Lophonetta specularioides* Common at Ushuaia and also seen along the Beagle Channel.

**Red Shoveler** *Spatula platalea* 17 at Ushuaia.

**Chiloe Wigeon** ♦ *Mareca sibilatrix* Common at Ushuaia.

**Yellow-billed Pintail** *Anas [georgica] spinicauda* Fairly common at Ushuaia.

**Yellow-billed Pintail** ♦ [South Georgia Pintail] *Anas [georgica] georgica* A total of 16 at South Georgia.

**Yellow-billed Teal** *Anas flavirostris* Common at Ushuaia.

**Cape Verde Swift** ♦ *Apus alexandri* Four at Praia port.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus* One followed the ship for a time on 27th April as we steamed northwestwards off the coast of West Africa! A migrant taking a big shortcut or an individual swept offshore by high winds?

**Rock Dove (introduced)** *Columba livia* Feral birds were common on St Helena.

**Zebra Dove (introduced)** *Geopelia striata* Common on St Helena.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* One was seen at a pool at the back of Georgetown on St Helena by some of the birders on board.

**Gough Moorhen** ♦ *Gallinula comeri* 10 seen and another 10 heard on Tristan da Cunha.

**Snowy Sheathbill** ♦ *Chionis albus* Locally common on South Georgia, with 182 in a day in the southeast. Also, one that came aboard en route from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia.

**Magellanic Oystercatcher** ♦ *Haematopus leucopodus* Six at Ushuaia.

**Blackish Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ater* A few at Ushuaia and one along the Beagle Channel.

**Rufous-chested Dotterel** ♦ *Zonibyx modestus* An immature at Ushuaia.

**Southern Lapwing** *Vanellus chilensis* Three at Ushuaia.

**St. Helena Plover (or Wirebird)** ♦ *Anarhynchus sanctaehelenae* Up to 26 in a day on St Helena. The population has started to recover, with the latest estimate being 545 mature individuals. As a result, the conservation status has been downgraded from Critically Endangered to Vulnerable. Very good to see a species moving in the right direction for a change!

**White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Common at Ushuaia.

**White Tern** *Gygis alba* Common at St Helena and Ascension Island, and in the seas around them. Up to 100 in a day.

**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* Common at St Helena and Ascension Island, and more locally in the seas around them. Up to 150 in a day.

**Black Noddy** *Anous minutus* Very common at St Helena and Ascension Island, and more locally in the seas around them. Up to 500 in a day.

**Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscatus* Numerous at Ascension Island and in the surrounding waters, with up to 1500 in a day. A total of 10 around St Helena.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* Observed on migration from the waters around Gough northwards, with up to 75 in a day.

**South American Tern** *Sterna hirundinacea* Fairly common at Ushuaia and 100 in the Beagle Channel.

**Antarctic Tern** ♦ *Sterna vittata* Common at South Georgia, Gough and the Tristan group, with some in the waters between them. Up to 100 in a day.

**Brown-hooded Gull** ♦ *Chroicocephalus maculipennis* 12 at Ushuaia.

**Dolphin Gull** ♦ *Leucophaeus scoresbii* Fairly common at Ushuaia and 50 along the Beagle Channel.

**Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus* Common from Ushuaia along the Beagle Channel and at South Georgia. Up to 100 in a day.

**Long-tailed Jaeger (or Long-tailed Skua)** *Stercorarius longicaudus* At least 18 migrants in total between the waters south of St Helena and the Cape Verde Islands.

**Parasitic Jaeger (or Arctic Skua)** *Stercorarius parasiticus* Singles at St Helena, Ascension Island and between Ascension and the Cape Verde Islands.

**Chilean Skua** ♦ *Stercorarius chilensis* Four in the Beagle Channel.

**Brown Skua** ♦ [Falkland Skua] *Stercorarius [antarcticus] antarcticus* Two in the outermost reaches of the Beagle Channel.

**Brown Skua** ♦ [Tristan or Subtropical Skua] *Stercorarius [antarcticus] hamiltoni* Common from the waters south of Gough to the Tristan group. Up to 40 in a day.

**Brown Skua** ♦ [Subantarctic Skua] *Stercorarius [antarcticus] lonnbergi* Common at South Georgia. Up to 20 in a day.

**South Polar Skua** ♦ *Stercorarius maccormicki* Three singles between St Helena and Ascension Island.

**Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* Common at St Helena with up to 50 in a day. Also two singles south of St Helena and small numbers along the route from St Helena to Ascension Island



and on to the Cape Verde Islands.

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* 12 at Ascension Island and one at sea two days beyond Ascension.

**King Penguin** ♦ *Aptenodytes patagonicus* Very numerous at South Georgia where we recorded up to 20,000 in a day. A few at sea before arriving and after departing from the island.

**Chinstrap Penguin** ♦ *Pygoscelis antarcticus* Numerous in the southeast of South Georgia where we recorded 2050 in a day.

**Gentoo Penguin** ♦ *Pygoscelis papua* Numerous at South Georgia where we recorded up to 560 in a day. Also two at the Beagle Channel.

**Magellanic Penguin** ♦ *Spheniscus magellanicus* 50 along the Beagle Channel

**Macaroni Penguin** ♦ *Eudyptes chrysolophus* Numerous but localized at South Georgia where we recorded up to 500 in a day. A few at sea before arriving and after departing from the island.

**Northern Rockhopper Penguin** ♦ *Eudyptes moseleyi* Numerous at Gough where we counted around 5000. Also two at Inaccessible Island.

**Southern Rockhopper Penguin** ♦ *Eudyptes chrysolophus* A total of four at sea between Tierra del Fuego and South Georgia but all were observed in the first half of the journey.

**Wilson's Storm Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Fairly common from the waters off Tierra del Fuego through South Georgia to the waters south of Gough. Up to 20 in a day. In addition, two between Tristan da Cunha and St Helena and one between Ascension Island and the Cape Verde Islands.

**Wilson's Storm Petrel [Fuegian Storm Petrel]** *Oceanites [oceanicus] chilensis* Numerous in the Beagle Channel where we recorded around 500. A potential split.

**Grey-backed Storm Petrel** ♦ *Garrodia nereis* Small numbers between South Georgia and Gough, including around Gough itself. Also, one before we arrived at South Georgia.

**White-faced Storm Petrel** ♦ *Pelagodroma marina* Two south of Gough, Six south of Ascension and another four close to Praia.

**White-bellied Storm Petrel** ♦ [Inaccessible Storm Petrel] *Fregetta [grallaria] 'leucogaster'* Regular in small numbers from the Tristan group to the waters south of St Helena. May well prove to be a distinct species.

**Black-bellied Storm Petrel** ♦ [Gough Storm Petrel] *Fregetta [tropica] 'melanoleuca'* This 'white-bellied Black-bellied Storm Petrel' was very common from the waters around Gough north to the waters of the Tristan group. Up to 150 in a day. May well prove to be a distinct species.

**Black-bellied Storm Petrel** ♦ *Fregetta tropica* This regular 'black-bellied Black-bellied Storm Petrel' was common from the waters between Tierra del Fuego and South Georgia, through South Georgia to the waters to the northeast of the island. Up to 80 in a day.

**Southern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea epomophora* A total of eight in the outer reaches of the Beagle Channel and the first part of the ocean crossing to South Georgia.

**Snowy (or Wandering) Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* Fairly common or common from the outer reaches of the Beagle Channel through South Georgia. Our last was near Gough. Up to 20 in a day.

**Tristan Albatross** ♦ *Diomedea dabbenena* Only recorded on the approaches to and departure from Gough, and around Gough itself where we recorded 70 in a day.

**Sooty Albatross** ♦ *Phoebastria fusca* Common or fairly common from the waters southwest of Gough to the Tristan group. Up to 30 in a day. We even had two on our first day after leaving South Georgia.

**Light-mantled (Sooty) Albatross** ♦ *Phoebastria palpebrata* Small numbers during the crossing between Tierra del Fuego and South Georgia, around South Georgia and during the first day after leaving South Georgia.

**Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** ♦ *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* Numerous around Gough and the Tristan group with up to 370 in a day.

**Grey-headed Albatross** ♦ *Thalassarche chrysostoma* Common during the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia, with up to 20 in a day. A few around South Georgia itself up until the first day after we left.

**Shy Albatross** *Thalassarche cauta* A total of three singles in the waters both south and north of Gough.

**Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris* Common and often numerous from the Beagle Channel through South Georgia to the waters around Gough. Up to 200 in a day.

**Leach's Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates leucorhous* Fairly common from the waters around Ascension Island to the Cape Verde Islands. In addition, two off St Helena. Most were clearly migrating northwards.

**Band-rumped Storm Petrel [St Helena Storm Petrel]** *Hydrobates [castro] helena* Common or fairly common in the waters around St Helena and Ascension Island. Up to 30 in a day.

**Cape Verde Storm Petrel** ♦ *Hydrobates jabejabe* Two off Praia in the Cape Verde Islands.

**Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* Numerous from the Beagle Channel through South Georgia and Gough to the Tristan Group. Up to 150 in a day.

**Northern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes halli* Common or fairly common from the Beagle Channel to South Georgia. Up to 70 in a day. Also one between South Georgia and Gough.

**Southern (or Antarctic) Fulmar** ♦ *Fulmarus glacialis* 20 in the Beagle Channel and eight more during the rest of the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia.

**Cape Petrel (Pintado P)** *Daption capense* Regularly recorded but rarely common from the Beagle Channel to the waters around South Georgia. Up to 20 in a day. This is a species that seems to be in severe decline. We used to see far more per day in the past in the same area, with 50-200 in a day a routine event.

**Blue Petrel** ♦ *Halobaena caerulea* Common to numerous during the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia and off the southeast end of South Georgia. Up to 200 in a day.

**Broad-billed Prion** ♦ *Pachyptila vittata* Numerous in the waters around Gough with up to 200 in a day. First seen two days before arriving at Gough.

**MacGillivray's Prion** ♦ *Pachyptila macgillivrayi* Around 25 were observed in the waters southwest of Gough.

**Antarctic Prion** ♦ (**Dove P**) *Pachyptila desolata* Often numerous during the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia and smaller numbers around the island itself. Up to 2000 in a day.

**Slender-billed (or Thin-billed) Prion** ♦ *Pachyptila belcheri* Common from the outer reaches of the Beagle Channel to South Georgia and the waters to the northeast. Up to 80 in a day.

**Fairy Prion** *Pachyptila turtur* Common during the latter half of the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia, with up to 80 in a day. A few around South Georgia itself.

**Kerguelen Petrel** ♦ *Aphrodroma brevirostris* Common or fairly common during the crossings between Tierra del Fuego and South Georgia and between South Georgia and Gough. Up to 30 in a day.

**Great-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma macroptera* Common and sometimes numerous from the waters southwest of Gough past Gough itself to the Tristan group. A spectacular concentration of 5000 at dusk at Tristan da Cunha!

**White-headed Petrel** ♦ *Pterodroma lessonii* A total of six between South Georgia and Gough.

**Atlantic Petrel** ♦ *Pterodroma incerta* Common in the waters to the southwest of Gough and around the island itself. Two even on the first full day out of South Georgia and small numbers in the Tristan group.

**Soft-plumaged Petrel** ♦ *Pterodroma mollis* Numerous from leaving South Georgia through Gough to the Tristan group. Up to 500 in a day. In addition, small numbers during the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia.

**Fea's (or Cape Verde) Petrel** ♦ *Pterodroma feae* Three off Praia in the Cape Verde Islands.

**Grey Petrel** ♦ *Procellaria cinerea* Fairly common around Gough and in the waters to the southwest. Up to 20 in a day. In addition, four during the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia.

**White-chinned Petrel** *Procellaria aequinoctialis* Common from the outer reaches of the Beagle Channel to South Georgia, with up to 60 in a day. A few en route to Gough.

**Spectacled Petrel** ♦ *Procellaria conspicillata* Common from the area southwest of Gough through Gough itself to the Tristan group and beyond. Up to 40 in a day. A true 'mega' bird of this cruise!

**Westland Petrel** ♦ *Procellaria westlandica* Two in the outer reaches of the Beagle Channel.

**Cory's Shearwater** ♦ *Calonectris borealis* Usually small numbers but sometimes more common from the waters around Nightingale through Ascension Island to the Cape Verde Islands. Up to 11 in a day.

**Scopoli's Shearwater** ♦ *Calonectris diomedea* Two singles were observed during the voyage from Ascension Island to the Cape Verde Islands by other birders on board.

**Cape Verde Shearwater** ♦ *Calonectris edwardsii* 25 off Praia in the Cape Verde Islands. Also one a couple of days earlier.

**Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna grisea* Numerous in the Beagle Channel where we recorded 2000. Small numbers during the crossing to South Georgia, around South Georgia itself and en route to Gough. Lastly, a single off St Helena.

**Great Shearwater** *Ardenna gravis* Up to 20 in a day during the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia and numerous in the waters around Gough and the Tristan group with up to 1000 in a day. Also one off the southeast end of South Georgia.

**Subantarctic (or Subantarctic Little) Shearwater** ♦ *Puffinus elegans* Numerous in the waters around Gough, with up to 150 in a day. In addition, a few in the Tristan group.

**Boyd's Shearwater** ♦ *Puffinus boydi* Four off Praia in the Cape Verde Islands.

**Magellanic Diving Petrel\*** ♦ *Pelecanoides magellani* One in the Beagle Channel. This once fairly common species is in steep decline owing to predation by accidentally introduced American Mink from storm-wrecked or abandoned fur farms.

**South Georgia (or Georgian) Diving Petrel\*** ♦ *Pelecanoides georgicus* Common during the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia and around South Georgia itself. Up to 20 were identified in a day (among the many unidentified).

**Common (or Subantarctic) Diving Petrel** *Pelecanoides urinatrix* Fairly common during the crossing from Tierra del Fuego to South Georgia and around South Georgia itself. Up to 12 were identified in a day (among the many unidentified). Small numbers from South Georgia to Gough.

**Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* Small numbers in the waters off St Helena and Ascension Island, and during the voyage from Ascension to the Cape Verde Islands. Up to 7 in a day.

**Ascension Frigatebird** ♦ *Fregata aquila* We counted 1200 at or around the sole colony at Bostwain Bird Island off Ascension Island. The species was fairly common offshore as well, even being recorded 20-30 nautical miles from Ascension. In addition, an immature south of St Helena, a lucky bonus for those disembarking there.

**Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* One not far south of St Helena, a total of 14 around Ascension Island and a total of four as we approached the Cape Verde Islands.

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* Numerous around Ascension Island, where we recorded 150 and common on the approach to Praia in the Cape Verde Islands. In addition four at St Helena.

**Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* Numerous at and around Ascension Island, where we recorded up to 700 in a day and a big colony was observed. In addition, up to 20 in a day at and around at St Helena.

**Neotropic (or Olivaceous) Cormorant** *Nannopterum brasilianum* One at Ushuaia and 15 more in the Beagle Channel.

**Rock Shag (or Rock Cormorant) ♦ *Leucocarbo magellanicus*** One at Ushuaia and three more in the Beagle Channel.

**Imperial Shag (or Imperial Cormorant) ♦ *Leucocarbo atriceps*** Common at Ushuaia and 3000 in the Beagle Channel.

**South Georgia Shag ♦ *Leucocarbo georgianus*** Very common at South Georgia with up to 1000 in a day. Even more numerous at Shag Rocks where we counted 2000 or more.

**Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus*** It was pretty weird to observe no fewer than five of these giants from a big ship in the Beagle Channel!

**Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*** Two over the Beagle Channel crossing between islands.

**Crested Caracara *Caracara plancus*** One along the Beagle Channel.

**Chimango Caracara *Milvago chimango*** Four in Ushuaia and one along the Beagle Channel.

**American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*** A few at Ushuaia.

**Buff-winged Cinclodes *Cinclodes fuscus*** One at Ushuaia.

**Grey-flanked Cinclodes *Cinclodes oustaleti*** One at Ushuaia.

**Common Myna (introduced) *Acridotheres tristis*** Numerous on St Helena with up to 120 in a day.

**Tristan Thrush ♦ *Turdus eremita*** Four of the nominate race on Tristan da Cunha and nine of the race *gordoni* on Inaccessible Island.

**House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus*** Six at Ushuaia.

**Iago (or Cape Verde) Sparrow ♦ *Passer iagoensis*** Eight at Praia port, Cape Verde Islands.

**Red Fody (introduced) *Foudia madagascariensis*** Fairly common on St Helena.

**Java Sparrow ♦ (introduced) *Padda oryzivora*** Common on St Helena, with up to 30 in a day. Debatable a 'diamond bird' on this tour now that the native population in Indonesia is nearing extinction!

**Common Waxbill (introduced) *Estrilda astrild*** Fairly common on St Helena.

**South Georgia Pipit ♦ *Anthus antarcticus*** Now fairly common again on South Georgia thanks to the successful rat eradication campaign. Up to 13 in a day.

**Yellow Canary (introduced) *Crithagra flaviventris*** Fairly common on St Helena.

**Inaccessible Island Finch ♦ *Nesospiza acunhae*** At least eight on Inaccessible Island, some of which were fairly close.

**Gough Finch ♦ (G Island F) *Rowettia goughensis*** A group of six at Gough were distant.

## MAMMALS

**Culpeo** *Lycalopex culpaeus* One at Ushuaia.

**South American Fur Seal** *Arctocephalus australis* 50 in the Beagle Channel.

**Antarctic Fur Seal** *Arctocephalus gazella* Numerous at South Georgia with up to 800 in a day. A few at sea as we approached and left the island.

**Subantarctic Fur Seal** *Arctocephalus tropicalis* Numerous at Gough and in the Tristan group. Up to 200 in a day. A few far out at sea in the surrounding area.

**South American Sea Lion** *Otaria flavescens* 40 in the Beagle Channel.

**Weddell Seal** *Leptonychotes weddellii* 12 at Drygalski Fjord in southeast South Georgia.

**Southern Elephant Seal** *Mirounga leonina* Not many were left on land by the time of our visit to South Georgia. Up to 23 in a day.

**Southern Right Whale** *Eubalaena australis* One at the southeast end of South Georgia.

**Antarctic Minke Whale** *Balaenoptera bonaerensis* One in the Beagle Channel.

**Sei Whale** *Balaenoptera borealis* A total of 15 in the Beagle Channel.

**Fin Whale** *Balaenoptera physalus* A total of 22 between Tierra del Fuego and South Georgia and just one between South Georgia and Gough.

**Humpback Whale** *Megaptera novaeangliae* Two in the Beagle Channel and one off South Georgia.

**Dwarf Sperm Whale** *Kogia sima* One to the south of St Helena.

**Sperm Whale** *Physeter macrocephalus* A total of six during the voyage from Ascension Island to the Cape Verde Islands.

**Shepherd's Beaked Whale** *Tasmacetus shepherdi* A lucky sighting of one of these rare creatures off Tristan da Cunha.

**Blainville's Beaked Whale** *Mesoplodon densirostris* Four between Ascension Island and the Cape Verde Islands. Two possibles.

**Cuvier's Beaked Whale** *Ziphius cavirostris* Three between St Helena and Ascension Island.

**Short-finned Pilot Whale** *Globicephala macrorhynchus* Six observations between the Tristan group and the Cape Verde Islands with the largest pod being 150 off Tristan da Cunha.

**Risso's Dolphin** *Grampus griseus* Around 12 on one day between Ascension Island and the Cape Verde Islands.

**Peale's Dolphin** *Sagmatias australis* Three in the Beagle Channel.

**Hourglass Dolphin *Sagmatias cruciger*** Rather common approaching South Georgia and departing from it. Up to 18 in a day.

**Dusky Dolphin *Sagmatias obscurus*** 12 in the Beagle Channel.

**Pantropical Spotted Dolphin *Stenella attenuata*** Regular sightings from south of St Helena to more than halfway from Ascension Island to the Cape Verde Islands. Up to 50 in a day.

**Clymene (or Short-snouted Spinner) Dolphin *Stenella clymene*** Numerous between Ascension Island and the Cape Verde Islands (but none close to either). Up to 300 in a day.

**Rough-toothed Dolphin *Steno bredanensis*** Up to eight at St Helena, Ascension Island and en route to the Cape Verde Islands.

**Common Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*** A few records from south of St Helena to Ascension Island. Up to 12 in a day.