

THE ATLANTIC ODYSSEY

24 MARCH – 3 MAY 2011

TOUR REPORT

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From Lesser Snow Petrels amongst the icebergs in the Antarctic Sound to Fea's Petrels amongst the volcanoes of the Cape Verdes, from Andean Condors and Wandering Albatrosses, two of the world's largest flying birds, to Inaccessible Island Rail, the world's smallest flightless bird, and from mighty Fin Whales in the Southern Ocean to acrobatic Spinner Dolphins and flying-fishes in the doldrums, our Atlantic Odyssey was truly a voyage of extremes. Our journey of 7,111 nautical miles (13,170 km) from Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego to Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands, via the Antarctic Sound, South Georgia, Gough, Tristan da Cunha, St Helena and Ascension, gave us an unparalleled opportunity to observe the multitude of sea-birds and cetaceans in the Southern Ocean and Atlantic, and took us to some of the remotest islands on the planet. Our home for the 38 days of the voyage was the 89m long *M/V Plancius*. Built in 1976 as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy and with an ice strength rating of 1D and top speed of 12 knots, she was the ideal ship for our journey. Our friendly Captain Tiemes, his crew and the competent Oceanwide Expeditions team led by Rinie van Meurs made every effort to ensure that we saw as many of the splendours and as much of the wildlife as possible in our five and a half weeks on board, and our only real problems were with the weather. A raging storm in the Antarctic Peninsula put paid to all our hopes of landing on the continent, and continuing bad weather in South Georgia reduced our number of landings there, but we were blessed with fine weather in the Tristan group, enabling us to make a rare landing on Inaccessible Island, and thereafter the weather was very kind to us. For the birders and cetacean enthusiasts, sea-watching from the *Plancius* provided endless enjoyment as we passed through an ever-changing panoply of sea-birds and encountered an excellent diversity of whales and dolphins. The long hours spent out on deck were rewarded with sightings of no less than 46 species of 'tubenoses' and 18 species of cetaceans, not to mention countless flying fishes and an assortment of other interesting marine creatures. For many of us, however, it was the excursions ashore and zodiac cruises that provided the highlights of the trip. These included three great landings in South Georgia, a zodiac cruise along the east coast of Gough, two landings on Tristan da Cunha, a fantastic landing on Inaccessible, a zodiac cruise at Nightingale, three days onshore and a dolphin cruise in St Helena, a zodiac cruise at Boatswain Bird Island and a day and a half on Ascension, and two days on Santiago and a day on Fogo in the Cape Verdes.

Our total bird list of 182 species was surprisingly high, given that we spent most of our time at sea, and included such cracking birds as Spectacled Duck, Andean Condor and Magellanic Woodpecker in Tierra del Fuego, Wandering and Southern Royal Albatrosses and Antarctic Petrel in the Drake Passage, Adelie Penguin and Lesser Snow Petrel in the Antarctic Sound, King Penguin, Macaroni Penguin and South Georgia Pipit in South Georgia, Northern Rockhopper Penguin, Gough Moorhen and Gough Bunting on Gough Island, Inaccessible Island Rail, Tristan Thrush and Tristan Bunting in the Tristan group, St Helena Plover on St Helena, Ascension Frigatebird on Ascension, and Bourne's Heron, Cape Verde Owl, Cape Verde Swift, Cape Verde Warbler and Iago Sparrow in the Cape Verde Islands. We also came across a good selection of rarities, including a Westland Petrel in the Drake Passage, a Franklin's Gull in Tristan da Cunha, a Common Swift on Ascension, and two Black Herons, an Intermediate Egret, a Western Reef Egret and a Black Tern in the Cape Verde Islands. Cetacean highlights included a Southern Bottlenose Whale in the Drake Passage, a close pod of Humpback Whales in the Antarctic Sound, several schools of playful Hourglass Dolphins and at least seven Fin Whales in the Scotia Sea, a pod of False Killer Whales as we were approaching Tristan, a huge school of Pantropical Spotted Dolphins during our dolphin cruise off St Helena, a pod of Killer Whales en route to Ascension, and two very close Sperm Whales, several schools of acrobatic Spinner Dolphins and a pod of very obliging Short-finned Pilot Whales between Ascension and the Cape Verdes.

Our great adventure began in Ushuaia – the most southerly town in the world – on the shores of the Beagle Channel. It was still light when we arrived, but it had been a long and wearisome flight out so we headed straight to our pleasant little hotel for a good night's rest. The birding began in earnest the next morning as we drove out to Tierra del Fuego National Park, only a few kilometres west of town. Our local guide Esteban was a keen and knowledgeable birder, and we had a great morning in the park, finding almost everything we could have expected including seven Spectacled Ducks, five Great Grebes, eight Andean Condors, a Chilean Hawk, four Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles, two extraordinarily tame Magellanic Woodpeckers, a Green-backed Firecrown and three White-throated Treerunners. After an excellent picnic lunch in the park, we visited the shore near the Tolkeyen Hotel and here, amongst the many waterbirds, saw several Black Oystercatchers, a Magellanic Oystercatcher, a little flock of attractive Rufous-chested Dotterels and a few White-rumped Sandpipers. Back in Ushuaia, we checked out a small lake near the harbour and found a couple of Red Shovelers with a large flock of Speckled Teal, about 15 Brown-hooded Gulls and a party of Long-tailed Meadowlarks.

We began the next day with a visit to the municipal rubbish tip – the best locality in the world for the rather scarce and local White-throated Caracara. We soon found nine of these smart caracaras, along with dozens of Southern Crested and Chimango Caracaras and several extremely tame Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles, and then headed off along the coast for a short sea-watch, but there was little about other than a pair of Fuegian Steamer-Ducks and a few Neotropic Cormorants. Later, the more energetic amongst us took the ski lift up to the base of the Martial Glacier to search for the near-mythical White-bellied Seedsnipe. As usual, there were no seedsnipes to be seen (although there were a few droppings), but we did find several Dark-faced Ground-Tyrants below the glacier and a pair of Austral Parakeets near the ski lift. We returned to Ushuaia for lunch at a pleasant little Chilean restaurant and then a walk by the harbour. Here we had close views of several pairs of Kelp Geese, a couple of Rock Shags and some attractive Dolphin Gulls and then, at 16:10, we finally boarded the *Plancius* and settled into our cabins. The ship sail at 18:10, only a few minutes late, and we were able to watch Ushuaia slowly slip away as we headed off down the Beagle Channel.

By the time we awoke the next morning, we were heading south across the Drake Passage with a light breeze from the northwest and a clear blue sky. There were lots of sea-birds about and the sea-watching was excellent. In this, our first full day at sea, we recorded an impressive total of 22 species

of sea-birds, including three King Penguins, several Southern Rockhopper Penguins, 12 Southern Royal Albatrosses, five Wandering Albatrosses, two Light-mantled Albatrosses, four Kerguelen Petrels, 10 Soft-plumaged Petrels, a Westland Petrel, two Sooty Shearwaters and a Subantarctic Skua, along with our first of many Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatrosses, Northern and Southern Giant-Petrels, Southern Fulmars, Cape Petrels, Blue Petrels, Antarctic Prions, White-chinned Petrels, Black-bellied and Wilson's Storm-Petrels, and Common Diving-Petrels.

We crossed the Antarctic Convergence during the night, and next morning it was distinctly colder. The wind had increased considerably; there was still a big swell and the sky was overcast with a few flakes of snow falling. The diversity of sea-birds was still high, but the composition had changed; we had left the Southern Royal Albatrosses behind and there were now fewer Black-browed Albatrosses and Soft-plumaged Petrels, but we were finding many more Grey-headed Albatrosses, Southern Fulmars, Cape Petrels, Antarctic Prions and Black-bellied Storm-Petrels, and saw our first Grey-backed Storm-Petrel. The day's highlight was a lovely Antarctic Petrel that followed the ship for a few minutes in mid-morning. We also saw our first cetaceans: a single Southern Bottlenose Whale which surfaced briefly close to the ship in the early afternoon and a small group of attractive Hourglass Dolphins. By sunset, we were approaching the channel between Nelson and Robert islands in the South Shetlands at the edge of the Antarctic continent.

When we awoke the next morning, we were in the Antarctic Sound, between the tip of the Peninsula and Joinville Island, but it was blowing a gale. The temperature was -12°C , there was low overcast and it was snowing heavily. The snow-covered peaks of the Peninsula were visible briefly before breakfast, but as the wind increased and the snow intensified, visibility decreased to a few hundred metres and there was nothing to see except icebergs. For the time being at least, there was no hope of making a landing at Hope Bay or Brown Bluff, and so we cruised back and forth slowly in the Antarctic Sound dodging icebergs and waiting for conditions to improve. Sadly they didn't, and if anything, they got worse. We moved into the Bransfield Strait in the evening, to avoid the ice, and hoped for better things on the morrow. But the wind continued to pick up, and we spent the whole of the next day riding out the storm in the lee of the Peninsula, although visibility was so poor that we couldn't see it. For a time, conditions were so bad that we were warned not to go out on deck! Despite the awful weather, we managed to see a few birds including three Adelie Penguins resting on ice floes, about 45 pretty little Lesser Snow Petrels, a Pale-faced Sheathbill, several Antarctic Terns and a few Southern Fulmars and Cape Petrels. Five Humpback Whales passed close by the ship on our first day in the Sound, and there were a few Antarctic Fur Seals about.

By late afternoon on our second day in the Sound, we had to abandon all hope of landing on the continent and reluctantly headed out into the Bransfield Strait bound for South Georgia. Our route the next day took us past King George Island in the South Shetlands and round to the north of Elephant Island. The weather was still pretty bad, with winds gusting to 45 knots in the afternoon and a big sea, but we were able to do some sea-watching from the decks and saw good numbers of birds including 40 Chinstrap Penguins, 60 Southern Fulmars, another Antarctic Petrel, 200 Cape Petrels, at least 60 Lesser Snow Petrels, 30 Black-bellied Storm-Petrels, two more Pale-faced Sheathbills and two South Polar Skuas. Conditions continued to improve as we cruised east-northeast through the Scotia Sea, and for the next two days en route to South Georgia we enjoyed some excellent sea-watching, recording another six King Penguins, about 30 Chinstraps, a Wandering Albatross, a dozen Light-mantled Albatrosses, hundreds of Cape Petrels, nine Kerguelen Petrels, 65 Soft-plumaged Petrels, 150 Blue Petrels, at least three Fairy Prions, thousands of Antarctic Prions, two Slender-billed Prions and 30 Common Diving-Petrels, along with good numbers of Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatrosses, Northern and Southern Giant-Petrels, Southern Fulmars, White-chinned Petrels and Black-bellied Storm-Petrels. Cetaceans included about 10 Fin Whales, two more Southern Bottlenose Whales and several little groups of Hourglass Dolphins. The biggest surprise, however, was a Western Cattle Egret which appeared around the ship in the early morning of our second day in the Scotia Sea,

when we were still 270 nautical miles from South Georgia, and eventually took up residence by the zodiacs.

Our first sight of South Georgia came as we rounded Cape Disappointment at the southeast corner of the island in the early morning and headed in past Cooper Island to Cooper Bay. There were large numbers of sea-birds about, including our first Macaroni Penguins, three more Fairy Prions, our first Great Shearwater and at least four South Georgia Diving-Petrels amongst the many Common Diving-Petrels, and much to our delight, four South Georgia Pipits appeared around the ship as we were entering the bay. Although there was a strong westerly breeze blowing out at sea, the bay was surprisingly calm and conditions were ideal for a landing. We went ashore shortly after lunch and had a wonderful afternoon amongst the penguins and fur seals. There was much to see here: two pairs of Light-mantled Albatrosses circling over the hillside, a flock of Northern Giant-Petrels on the water, 50 South Georgia Shags flying around the bay or sitting on the rocks, 60 Pale-faced Sheathbills walking about amongst the penguins and fur seals, some very tame Subantarctic Skuas, two little groups of South Georgia Pintails and several more South Georgia Pipits. Antarctic Fur Seals were everywhere, and there were also a few groups of young Southern Elephant Seals amongst them. The star attractions, however, were the penguins: a small colony of Kings, with chocolate-coloured chicks of assorted sizes; a huge colony of Macaronis, with many rather scruffy moulting adults; several small colonies and loafing groups of Gentoos, and a few loafing Chinstraps from the large colony on nearby Cooper Island. Well pleased with this, our first landing, we left after dinner that evening for Grytviken, half way along the north coast of the island.

Next morning we awoke to find ourselves entering Cumberland Bay and approaching Grytviken, the 'capital' of South Georgia and last resting place of Ernest Shackleton. We went ashore after breakfast and made the customary pilgrimage to Shackleton's grave before wandering into 'town' to explore the remains of the whaling station and visit the museum and post office. It was a very gloomy day and raining heavily, so little effort was made to do any birding, but we did find a party of six Speckled Teals and a pair of South Georgia Pintails in the bay and two pairs of Light-mantled Albatrosses flying over the hillside. We left Cumberland Bay shortly after mid-day and headed out to sea. By now a strong wind had blown up from the north-east and it soon became clear that we would not be able to make a landing at Fortuna Bay where there is a large King Penguin colony. Plan B was quickly put into action, and we altered our course for Stromness Bay, where conditions were much calmer. We arrived off Stromness in mid-afternoon and had no difficulty in getting ashore near the old whaling station. Here we had a couple of hours to wander about amongst the Reindeer and Antarctic Fur Seals, photograph the Gentoos and Antarctic Terns, and gaze at the ruins of the whaling station from a safe distance.

Our plan for the next day was to go ashore at Salisbury Plain and Prion Island in the Bay of Isles. It was a rough journey there through the night, and when we arrived in the Bay of Isles early the next morning, it was blowing a near-gale. The landings had to be abandoned, and we set off immediately for Fortuna Bay in the hope that conditions might be a little better there. There were lots of sea-birds about as we cruised back along the north coast of South Georgia, including at least 25 Wandering Albatrosses, 30 White-chinned Petrels, seven Great Shearwaters and 35 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, but conditions did not improve and as soon as we entered Fortuna Bay, we could see that there was a big swell on the exposed landing beach. The forecast had been for the winds to ease, so we remained in the bay all afternoon in the hope that the swell would die down, but nothing changed and we had to be satisfied with very distant views of the huge King Penguin colony at the head of the bay. Taking consolation from the fact that we had had a wonderful landing in Cooper Bay, we said our farewells to South Georgia and headed out to sea that evening at the start of our long journey north.

It was 1,350 nautical miles from South Georgia to Gough Island in the South Atlantic, and five full days at sea. The strong north-westerly or westerly winds stayed with us for most of the way to Gough and we had some pretty rough seas for much of the time, but on the second day we crossed the Antarctic Convergence (at about 49°20'S), and thereafter it was pleasantly mild, with temperatures up to 15°C on the fifth day. By dusk that evening, we were only 90 nautical miles from Gough. The sea-watching on this leg of the journey was exceptional. We recorded a total of 35 species of birds including many for the first time and several for the last, as we moved from the cold Antarctic waters south of the Convergence into the warmer subantarctic waters of the South Atlantic. Our first full day out from South Georgia produced our first of many Sooty Albatrosses, Atlantic Petrels, Grey Petrels and Subantarctic Shearwaters and our last King Penguins; the second produced our first Great-winged Petrels, Spectacled Petrels and White-bellied Storm-Petrels and our last Southern Royal Albatross, Wandering Albatrosses, Cape Petrel and Blue Petrels. We saw our first Long-tailed Skua and our last Light-mantled Albatrosses (two immatures), Grey-headed Albatrosses, Slender-billed Prions and Black-bellied Storm-Petrel on the third day out; our first Tristan Albatrosses and Broad-billed Prions and our last definite Antarctic Prions on the fourth, and our first Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses and last Northern Giant-Petrel on the fifth. Soft-plumaged Petrels were common throughout the voyage, with counts of 100 or more every day, and there were also good numbers of Black-browed Albatrosses, Kerguelen Petrels, White-chinned Petrels (in the south) and Great Shearwaters, along with a few Southern Giant-Petrels, Sooty Shearwaters, Wilson's Storm-Petrels, Grey-backed Storm-Petrels and Common Diving-Petrels. Big brown skuas were recorded in small numbers every day, but it was not until our fifth day, as we were approaching Gough, that we could confidently assign them to Tristan Skua. An immature Salvin's Albatross appeared briefly around the ship in the morning of the fourth day, and an immature Shy or White-capped Albatross spent some time following us that afternoon. The rough seas made it very difficult to spot cetaceans, and all we saw on this leg of the journey were a few Hourglass Dolphins on the first two days out, a Fin Whale and three unidentified beaked whales on the third day, and a pod of Long-finned Pilot Whales on the fourth.

On the morning of 11 April, we awoke early to find ourselves approaching the eastern side of Gough. There were heavy showers about and some nasty gusts of wind, but conditions seemed to be improving and after a short wait the decision was taken to launch the zodiacs. Gough Island is a strict nature reserve and ordinary mortals are forbidden to land, but conditions were calm enough for us to approach within a few feet of the shore, and we spent a wonderful three hours cruising back and forth along the sheltered east coast of the island between the Glen and the tiny Penguin Island. Hundreds of Subantarctic Fur Seals dotted the shoreline and large colonies of fancy Northern Rockhopper Penguins extended up through the tussock grass on the steep slopes. As we approached close to the shore, we soon spotted a Gough Moorhen moving about in the tussock grass and our first Gough Buntings flying about over the cliffs. The views of the moorhen were not great and many of us had missed them, but we persevered for some time and eventually found at least four moorhens, two of which showed well. The buntings were much easier, and we had great views of several of these, notably on Penguin Island. Other birds here included several pairs of Sooty Albatrosses, lots of Broad-billed Prions and a dozen or so Tristan Skuas flying around the cliffs, about 20 Antarctic Terns foraging over the kelp, and four Brown Noddies, here at their most southerly outpost in the Atlantic. Well pleased, we returned to the ship and then set off for Tristan da Cunha, some 220 nautical miles to the northwest. As we steamed slowly away from Gough, we tried a bit of 'chumming' from the stern and this was a great success, bringing in about 20 Tristan Albatrosses, 50 Southern Giant-Petrels and 20 Spectacled Petrels, along with a few Sooty and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, Great Shearwaters and White-bellied Storm-Petrels, and a single Grey-backed Storm-Petrel. Once we had left the lea of the island, we found ourselves in rough seas again, but the sea-watching was excellent with the afternoon's tally including 12 Kerguelen Petrels, five Great-winged Petrels, 100 Soft-

plumaged Petrels, 40 Atlantic Petrels, 500 Broad-billed Prions, 10 Grey Petrels, 30 Spectacled Petrels, 60 Great Shearwaters, 30 Subantarctic Shearwaters and 20 White-bellied Storm Petrels.

By 07:30 the next morning, we were only 50 nautical miles from the impressive 2,060m volcanic cone of Tristan da Cunha. There were plenty of sea-birds about as we approached the island, including at least 100 Great Shearwaters, but the main excitement came from a small pod of False Killer Whales that obligingly cut across our bows. The views of Tristan were impressive as we cruised around the east side of the island to the settlement, grandly named Edinburgh, at the northwest corner, where we dropped anchor at 11:50. Fortunately, there was relatively little wind today and the big swell of yesterday had died down. Lunch, briefing and customs clearance were all rushed through, and by 14:00, the first of us were stepping ashore on Tristan – unquestionably the remotest inhabited island in the world. We had the rest of the afternoon on Tristan and several options were open to us, including a guided tour of the settlement, a hike up to the 1961 volcano, a round of golf at the remotest golf course in the world, and a bus trip out to the famous potato patches. For the serious birders, however, there was only one option – a quick dash up to the nearest *Phylica arborea* woodland to look for the island's only endemic land-bird, the Tristan Thrush, just in case we were unable to land on Inaccessible or Nightingale. This worked well: a thrush was soon found, everyone was alerted by radio, and all those who wanted to see it, did so. We then still had plenty of time to wander around the small town and call in at the post office and small gift shops to buy stamps and souvenirs. Returning to the ship that evening was quite tricky, as the wind had increased considerably during the afternoon and there was a big swell at the gangway, but everyone managed to get aboard safely, and we settled down to our first comfortable night at anchor since we had left Ushuaia.

Our good fortune with the weather continued, and there was only a light south-westerly breeze blowing the next morning and only a gentle swell. We had taken our local guides on board the previous night so that we could get an early start from Tristan, and by 08:00 we had dropped anchor off Inaccessible Island. Conditions were ideal, and by 09:00 we were stepping shore on Salt Beach on the north-east side of the island. Tristan Thrushes were everywhere and ridiculously tame, and it did not take us long to find some very tame Tristan Buntings (of the dull nominate form). Our main quarry, however, was the evocatively-named Inaccessible Island Rail – the world's smallest flightless bird. Initially we focussed on the large area of tussock grass behind the landing beach, but this was full of Subantarctic Fur Seals, the ground beneath the tussocks was completely bare, and it was hard to imagine that there could be any rails there. Fortunately, Adam (one of the Oceanwide Expedition leaders and a non-birder) had wandered off to a small patch of tussock grass where there were no fur seals. Here he spotted a bird which he assumed to be a rail creeping about in undergrowth and quickly alerted the rest of us by radio. There was something of a stampede as we all rushed down to the end of the beach and lined up alongside him, but thankfully it was not long before the rail put in another appearance, and over the course of the next hour or so, we had many great views. Delighted with our success, we returned to the ship and set sail immediately for Nightingale, less than 20 km away. We were very concerned at what we might find there, as only a month earlier, a cargo ship on its way from Brazil to Singapore had crashed into the island and sunk, releasing 1,400 tonnes of crude oil into the sea around the island. We had already seen large globules of oil on the beach at Inaccessible, but here on Nightingale, all the rocks along the shoreline were covered in a thick layer of oil. Large numbers of Northern Rockhopper Penguins had been affected by the oil spill, and about 2,000 had been rescued by the islanders and taken into care on Tristan, but there were still a few oiled birds about when we arrived. There was a slight swell at the landing site but nothing unduly worrying and so we prepared to make a landing. However, as soon as the first expedition staff went ashore, they discovered that jumping out of the zodiacs onto rocks covered in oil was a very dangerous business, and the landing had to be called off. Instead, we launched a fleet of zodiacs and went for a cruise along the sheltered side of the island and out to some of the tiny offshore islets. This

proved to be remarkably rewarding. The scenery was fantastic, with some amazingly colourful rock formations; there were hundreds of Subantarctic Fur Seals on the rocks and in the water all around us; and we were able to approach within a few feet of several very obliging Tristan Skuas and Antarctic Terns, a few Tristan Thrushes and lots of Tristan Buntings of the brightly coloured form *questi*. Later that afternoon, as we headed back to Tristan, we enjoyed some more excellent sea-watching with large numbers of Soft-plumaged Petrels, Spectacled Petrels and Great Shearwaters, and a few Subantarctic Shearwaters.

After another peaceful night at anchor off Edinburgh, we awoke to a lovely sunny day with only a light breeze. We now had the luxury of a second landing on Tristan, and this time for most of the day. Again there were several options. The most energetic went for a guided hike up to the 'Base' – the plateau at 2,000 feet above sea level surrounding Tristan's central volcano – and were rewarded with good views of several large Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross chicks on the nest. Some of us hiked up to the top of the 1961 volcano just outside town, while others did the guided walk around the settlement or went for a gentle stroll in the surrounding 'countryside'. The only birds to be seen were the odd Yellow-nosed Albatross, Tristan Skua and Antarctic Tern passing overhead, and it was strange to walk about in the gardens and fields around the settlement and not see a single small bird. However there were quite a few Southern Painted Ladies *Vanessa brasiliensis*, Tristan's only butterfly. The main birding interest of the day came when we returned to the *Plancius* in mid-afternoon. One of our group had stayed on board all day and spotted a superb adult Franklin's Gull amongst the Yellow-nosed Albatrosses and Antarctic Terns that were hanging about at the stern. The gull stayed around long enough for most of us to see it, and the albatrosses put on a superb show as they squabbled for fish scraps thrown out for them. We finally weighed anchor at 16:10 and, turning north-northeast, set off on the long voyage to St Helena. As the sun went down, we watched the magical island of Tristan da Cunha gradually disappear into the haze along with our last Sooty Albatrosses and Southern Giant-Petrels.

It took us another four full days to cover the 1,330 nautical miles to St Helena. Our first day at sea was a fine sunny day with a light northerly breeze, but for the next three days there was a stiff breeze from the north-east or south-east and the sea was quite rough. The temperature was now in the twenties and increasing day by day, and shorts were beginning to appear on deck. In the evening of the third day, we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn (23°27'S), and by sunset on the fourth, we were only about 200 nautical miles from St Helena. The sea-watching during these four days reached an all-time low and came as something of a shock to us after the wonderful numbers and diversity of sea-birds in the Tristan group. In four days of almost continuous sea-watching, we recorded only 13 species of birds. There were still quite a few birds about on our first day out from Tristan, when we were still only 160-300 nautical miles from the islands: six Yellow-nosed Albatrosses (our last), two Great-winged Petrels, 40 Soft-plumaged Petrels, an Atlantic Petrel, 20 Spectacled Petrels, a Sooty Shearwater, a Great Shearwater, eight White-bellied Storm-Petrels and our first definite Arctic Tern. The next day produced about 30 Spectacled Petrels and 20 White-bellied Storm-Petrels, our first White-faced Storm Petrel, and our last Black-browed Albatrosses (two), Great-winged Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrels (five), Atlantic Petrel and Great Shearwaters (two). On the following day, the third full day out from Tristan da Cunha, the only birds we recorded were 10 Spectacled Petrels, four White-bellied Storm-Petrels, two Arctic Terns and seven unidentified terns, probably Arctic Terns. There was a slight improvement in species diversity on the final day, but we only saw ten birds in total: our last Spectacled Petrel (in the early morning), our last White-bellied Storm-Petrel (in the early afternoon), our first two Madeiran Storm-Petrels, our first two Red-billed Tropicbirds, and four Arctic Terns. The only cetaceans on this leg of the journey were single unidentified whales on the first and second day out, a school of Common Bottle-nosed Dolphins also on the second day out, and a pod of at least four 'blackfish' (almost certainly False Killer Whales) on the third day out. We encountered our first flying fishes (Exocoetidae) on this day, and over a hundred were recorded on the fourth day.

By sunrise on 19 April, we were less than 60 nautical miles from St Helena. There were now lots more birds about, and as we approached the island we saw our first Masked Boobies, White Terns and Black Noddies, along with about 15 Madeiran Storm-Petrels, a few Red-billed Tropicbirds, dozens of Brown Noddies and a lone Sooty Tern. We finally dropped anchor at 11:45 just off the harbour at Jamestown on the western side of the island. It was very warm and humid, and summer gear was now very much in order. Lunch was early, and shortly after one o'clock, the first of us were going ashore. We had the best part of three full days in St Helena, and as in Tristan, we were offered a variety of things to do. For the birders, the immediate priority was a trip to Deadwood Plain to see the endemic St Helena Plover (or Wirebird). Two minibuses were waiting at the jetty and within minutes we were trundling up the hill and into the interior of the island. The St Helena Plovers were easily found, and we enjoyed great views of eight of these critically endangered birds, including a pair with two small chicks and a bird at the nest. There were also five Western Cattle Egrets in the grassland and a few White Terns flying about, but the only other birds that we saw were all introduced species – Rock Dove, Zebra Dove, Common Myna, Madagascar Fody, Common Waxbill, Java Sparrow and Yellow Canary. We were back in Jamestown in time for a stroll around town, a drink at the Consulate Hotel and, for the more energetic, a 'quick' run up and down the 699 steps of Jacob's Ladder. Later that evening, we dined at Anne's Place near the harbour to give our hard-working chefs their only night off in five weeks.

Immediately after breakfast the next morning, we were picked up by one of the island boats, the *Gannet*, and taken for a trip along the coast to look for dolphins and breeding sea-birds. We had not gone far before we found a school of at least 250 Pantropical Spotted Dolphins which stayed with us for about half an hour and put on a wonderful display. Continuing on, we finally reached Speery Island, a tall stack off the southern tip of St Helena where there were large numbers of breeding Masked Boobies, White Terns, Brown Noddies and Black Noddies. A few pairs of Sooty Terns also breed on Speery Island, but the sea was quite choppy and we only managed to see one of these. On the way back, we had some very close views of more White Terns and Black Noddies on Egg Island and found several pairs of Red-billed Tropicbirds nesting on the cliffs. We also had close views of a Green Sea Turtle *Chelonia mydas* and saw our first Pomarine Skua circling high in the sky. We were back in Jamestown by lunchtime, and then had the rest of the day free to potter about in the town or relax back on the ship.

On our last day in St Helena, Oceanwide Expeditions had laid on an island tour for us, and straight after breakfast we went ashore to board our fleet of minibuses for the trip into the interior. A great time was had by all, as we trundled round the island from scenic lookout to scenic lookout, calling in at Briars Pavilion, Napoleon's Tomb, Longwood House, Plantation House (with its ancient tortoises on the lawn) and Ladder Hill. A single Common Pheasant was spotted from one of the buses, but the only other land-birds that we saw were the seven common introduced species. We found at least three of the four species of butterfly that occur on the island, Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*, Diadem Butterfly *Hypolimnas misippus* and Long-tailed Blue *Lampides boeticus*, and also saw a dragonfly, probably *Pantala flavescens*, the only species recorded on the island since the endemic darter went extinct in the 1960s. We were back in town in the early afternoon, and had time for one last drink at the Consulate before returning to ship and setting off on the relatively short leg to Ascension Island just south of the equator. As we headed northwest out to sea, we came across another Pomarine Skua and a few Madeiran Storm-Petrels, but there was little else about, and we settled down to another two full days at sea.

For the next 700 nautical miles to Ascension, we were under the influence of the Southeast Trades, but the winds were very light and it was hot and humid. Our first full day was very poor for birds, producing only three Bulwer's Petrels, a White-faced Storm-Petrel, five Madeiran Storm-Petrels, a Red-billed Tropicbird and three Arctic Terns, but a very obliging pod of eight Killer Whales created considerable excitement in the morning, and there were plenty of flying-fishes to amuse us. The next day was a great improvement. Birds included our first two Cory's Shearwaters, two more White-faced

Storm-Petrels, our first Leach's Storm-Petrels (at least 30), four frigatebirds (presumably Ascension) with a large feeding flock of Sooty Terns, and a very co-operative South Polar Skua that stayed with the ship on and off for an hour and made repeated low passes over the top deck. Two Sperm Whales were seen blowing way off in the distance; a small group of Clymene Dolphins passed close by in the early morning, and a school of about 60 Pantropical Spotted Dolphins appeared around mid-day. Flying-fishes were abundant, and we also saw a Blue Shark *Prionace glauca*, a Green Sea Turtle and our first Portuguese Men-o-war *Physalia physalis*.

We were up at first light the next morning to witness our final approach to Ascension Island. There was a strong south-easterly breeze blowing and several heavy showers about, but these did not deter us, and immediately after breakfast we boarded the zodiacs for a cruise around Boatswain Bird Island, a small island surrounded by steep cliffs near the eastern tip of Ascension. There are huge numbers of sea-birds breeding on this island, including the entire population of Ascension Frigatebirds, and we were soon enjoying close-up views of these great birds, at rest on the cliffs or cruising about overhead. The relatively flat summit of the island was covered in nesting Masked Boobies and frigatebirds, while the cliff ledges supported thousands of nesting Black Noddies, hundreds of White Terns, about 200 Brown Boobies, several pairs of Red-footed Boobies and White-tailed Tropicbirds, and a few Red-billed Tropicbirds. The sea was too choppy for us to circumnavigate the island in the zodiacs, but on the sheltered side we could nose up under the cliffs and approach almost to within arm's length of the nesting Black Noddies. Well pleased with this excursion, we cruised round to Georgetown on the western side of the island and, shortly after lunch, went ashore. It was Easter Sunday and very quiet in the town, but the museum and gift shop were open and those who wanted could go for a swim at Comfortless Cove. A few Ascension Frigatebirds drifted lazily overhead, but the only other birds to be seen were three introduced species, Common Myna, Common Waxbill and Yellow Canary. We returned to the ship for dinner, and then went ashore again in late evening for a visit to Long Beach, an important nesting beach for Green Sea Turtles. After a brief introductory talk at the Conservation Office, we were taken to the beach and divided into two groups. Scouts were sent out to look for turtles and eventually two were found. There was a large crowd of us and no bright lights were permitted, but it was a remarkable experience nonetheless, watching these giants laying their eggs and meticulously covering them up before dragging themselves back to sea.

Early the next morning, a few of us returned to the beach in the hope of seeing turtles returning to the sea at first light. This was a great success. Two turtles were seen well; two Western Cattle Egrets were found on the beach, and a Common Swift, a very rare vagrant on Ascension Island, was seen flying over. After breakfast, we all went ashore and boarded an assortment of minibuses, land rovers and cars for a tour of the island. Our first stop was at the old turtle pens at the end of Long Beach, and nearby we found the two Cattle Egrets, but the Common Swift had obviously moved on. We stopped briefly at the U.S. Air Force Base and heard something of the military history of the island, and then continued on to Wideawake Fairs where a short walk brought us to the edge of a large Sooty Tern colony. The birds were just returning to the colony prior to breeding and there were only about 500 present, but the views we had were superb. Here also we had close looks at a pair of Brown Noddies with a large chick. Then, after a great view of the island from the top of Command Hill, we proceeded to the Two Boats Club for an excellent lunch. We had hoped to be able to drive to the top of Green Mountain, but recent torrential rain had washed out the road, and so instead we drove round to the ruins of an old NASA tracking station half way up the mountain, near the Devil's Ashpit. There were no signs of any Red-necked Francolins, the only other introduced species still surviving on the island, but we did find several very large land crabs *Gecarcinus lagostoma* and a couple of Diadem Butterflies. We were back in Georgetown in time for another stroll about town before returning to the *Planicus* and setting sail at 18:10 on the last leg of our journey to the Cape Verde Islands. As we cruised away from Ascension, we passed flock after flock of Masked Boobies and Brown Boobies returning to the colony on Boatswain Bird Island, and said farewell to our last White Terns and Brown and Black Noddies.

It was over 1,400 nautical miles from Ascension to the Cape Verdes and this took us another five full days at sea. It was now quite hot, with the temperature exceeding 31°C as we approached the doldrums on the equator, but shortly after, we came under the influence of the Northeast Trades and from then on there was a stiff breeze to cool us down. We also had quite a lot of rain on this sector, including some spectacular thunderstorms just north of the equator. The sea-watching was very good, both for birds and cetaceans. Five species of birds were recorded every day: Cory's Shearwater (up to 60 in a day), Bulwer's Petrel (up to 10), Leach's Storm-Petrel (up to 300), Long-tailed Skua (up to 12) and Arctic Tern (up to 300). We recorded our first Arctic Skua and last Madeiran Storm-Petrels, White-tailed Tropicbird, Masked Boobies and Red-footed Booby on the first day out from Ascension; a Wilson's Petrel and our last flocks of Sooty Terns on the second day; two Wilson's Petrels, an adult Pomarine Skua and another Arctic Skua on the third day; another Wilson's Petrel on the fourth day; and a Sooty Shearwater, our first Boyd's Shearwater, two Red-billed Tropicbirds and an Arctic Skua on the fifth day. The most surprising bird in these five days, however, was a Common House Martin which appeared around the ship in the evening of our second day out, when we were just north of the equator, and probably roosted on board. With light winds and calm seas, conditions for spotting cetaceans were excellent, and we did very well, especially on the second day out from Ascension, when we saw a total of six Sperm Whales (two at very close quarters), three pairs of Dwarf Sperm Whales, a pod of four Blainville's Beaked Whales, two Cuvier's Beaked Whales, at least six unidentified beaked whales, a school of 30 Spinner Dolphins and a very obliging pod of about 30 Short-finned Pilot Whales. The latter seemed to be quite interested in the ship, and allowed us to watch them at close range for over half an hour. The next day was also good for cetaceans, producing two more pairs of Dwarf Sperm Whales, a school of at least 80 Spinner Dolphins, a small school of Risso's Dolphins, another pod of Short-finned Pilot Whales and two small groups of unidentified beaked whales. This leg of the journey also produced an interesting crop of other marine creatures including at least three hammerhead sharks *Sphyrna* sp., a manta ray *Manta* sp., two Atlantic Blue Marlins *Makaira nigricans*, thousands of flying-fishes of various sizes, lots of By-the-wind Sailors *Veleva veleva* and a few Portuguese Men-o-War.

On the morning of 1 May, the 36th day since leaving Ushuaia, we found ourselves approaching the island of Santiago in the southern group of the Cape Verde Islands. We had been planning to arrive in Fogo this morning, but because of a mix-up with the flights for some of our fellow passengers, the Captain had agreed to change the itinerary slightly and proceed to Santiago first before visiting Fogo. As we slowly approached the southern tip of Santiago from about five miles out, we saw our first few Cape Verde Shearwaters and two Fea's Petrels, as well as four more Boyd's Shearwaters and a Red-billed Tropicbird, but there were surprisingly few birds about as we entered Praia harbour and pulled up alongside the pier. The Customs and Immigration officials came on board while we were having breakfast and by 09:00 the ship had been cleared and we were allowed to go ashore. Two of us had chosen to go on the cultural and historical tour of Praia and Cidade Velha (the old city) organised by the Oceanwide Expeditions team, but the rest of us boarded our bus for an excursion into the interior of the island. It was not long before we had seen our first Alexander's Kestrels and Cape Verde Swifts, and at our first stop in the lightly wooded hills, we found a pair of Iago Sparrows at their nest. Soon after, in a patch of luxuriant vegetation in the valley near São Lourenço dos Orgãos, we found our other main target, several very obliging pairs of the endemic Cape Verde Warbler, along with more Iago Sparrows. There were lots of other birds about, but species diversity was very limited: just Rock Dove, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Brown-necked Raven, Spectacled Warbler, Blackcap, Spanish Sparrow and the introduced Common Waxbill. However, at the Barragem de Poilão (a small reservoir) a bit further down the valley, we found an excellent assortment of waterbirds including a Squacco Heron, 100 Western Cattle Egrets, two Grey Herons, 12 Little Egrets, several Common Moorhens, two Black-winged Stilts, two Common Sandpipers and three Common Greenshanks. A small dark heron at the far end of the reservoir soon caught our attention, and after debating its identity for some time through the telescope, we decided to take the bus to the other end of the reservoir and take a better look. The track took us to within 50 metres of the bird and to our

amazement we discovered not only that it was a Black Heron but also that there were two of them! Delighted with this find, we passed word on to our fellow passengers in another bus and then headed on up the valley to the botanic gardens at São Jorge dos Orgãos, where we had our picnic lunch. There were more Cape Verde Warblers and Iago Sparrows here, and we spotted a Cape Verde Buzzard being mobbed by two Brown-necked Ravens over the distant crags. Later, we moved over into another valley and visited the big mahogany tree in which the entire world population of the critically endangered Bourne's Heron breeds. The breeding season was supposed to have ended, and it therefore came as a very pleasant surprise when we discovered three recently fledged juveniles still sitting in the tree. While we were waiting around in the hope that an adult heron would fly in, another Cape Verde Buzzard appeared over the hill and this time we had much better views. When one of the juvenile herons eventually flew down to the ground and started to forage for itself, we decided it was time to leave. After another quick look at the reservoir, we headed back down to the lowlands and out to an area of semi-desert near the airport, where we found a Bar-tailed (Desert) Lark and a dozen Black-crowned Sparrow-Larks, along with about 15 Common Quail. Well satisfied with this very rewarding first day on Santiago, we headed back to the *Plancius* for a peaceful evening tied up alongside the pier.

The ship left Santiago during the night and by first light the next morning we were cruising very slowly towards São Filipe on the west side of the spectacular volcanic island of Fogo, about 50 nautical miles west of Santiago. Sea-watching on the way in was very rewarding, producing a couple of Fea's Petrels, good numbers of Cape Verde Shearwaters and Boyd's Shearwaters, a White-faced Storm-Petrel, a pod of Short-finned Pilot Whales and a huge school of Pantropical Spotted Dolphins. We dropped anchor during breakfast, and by 09:00 most of us were going ashore in the zodiacs for a tour of the island. This was very much a cultural, historical and scenic tour, and there were rather few birds to be seen, the most notable being eight Alexander's Kestrels, a Sanderling, five Cape Verde Swifts, about 20 Grey-headed Kingfishers, four Brown-necked Ravens and a vagrant Common House Martin. Our first stop was for a stroll in São Filipe, a much smaller and altogether much prettier town than Praia, and here we found the House Martin. We then drove high up into the caldera in the centre of the island and eventually came to the little village of Portela, where a pleasant lunch awaited us at a small guest house. We had an opportunity to taste (and purchase) the local wines at the nearby winery and also to walk out onto a recent lava flow, before heading off back down again. As we approached the little harbour, we could see the *Plancius* returning from a short 'pelagic' cruise that the Captain had agreed to lay on for those keen birders who were not interested in the island tour. This cruise, around nearby Brava Island, had come across several large feeding flocks of seabirds, big numbers of Pantropical Spotted Dolphins, a few Spinner Dolphins and a small pod of Melon-headed Whales. Fortunately, one of the feeding flocks was still around when we left Fogo in the early evening, and as we circled slowly around, we had fantastic views of hundreds of Cape Verde Shearwaters and Arctic Terns, dozens of Boyd's Shearwaters and about 20 Brown Boobies plunging and diving all about us. A Black Tern also appeared briefly amongst the many Arctic Terns. As we settled down to our last night on board the *Plancius*, we cruised slowly back east towards our final destination, Santiago.

As always, there were a few hiccups as we entered Praia harbour the next morning. First the pilot was late, then there was a problem with the gangway, and finally there was the usual confusion over visas. The hanging about in the harbour was not, however, completely wasted, as we spotted a Yellow-legged Gull flying around. Then all too suddenly it was time to say farewell to our fellow passengers, the expedition staff, the Captain and his crew and, of course, the *Plancius*, the ship that had served us so well for so long. One of us had decided to stay on board all the way to Madeira, but the rest of us stepped ashore for the last time at 10:00, boarded our little bus, and drove off into town. After dropping off a couple who had chosen to do their own thing for the day, we set off on another tour of the island. Our first stop was at Fortezza São Filipe, the fort near the old city. We had thought we might see a Cape Verde (Peregrine) Falcon in the gorge here, but all we saw were a few Black-

crowned Sparrow-Larks and Iago Sparrows. Dropping down into the gorge, we came to the old city, and a short walk up the valley produced our best views yet of Cape Verde Swifts flying about amongst the palms. After a pleasant picnic lunch in the town square, we headed north through the interior of the island to the Serra Malagueta, a spectacular range of hills in the northern part of the island where there used to be Cape Verde Falcons. Again the falcons eluded us, but the scenery was terrific and we had more great views of the swift. On the way back, we had another look at the Cape Verde Warblers near São Lourenço dos Orgãos, and then drove down to two small coastal lagoons at Pedra Badejo. Here we found an interesting assortment of birds including a very nice dark-phase Western Reef Egret, four Common Ringed Plovers, three Kentish Plovers, a Whimbrel, three Ruddy Turnstones, four Sanderlings and at least 25 Collared Doves. Our views of the Collared Doves were poor, and we could not tell whether they were Eurasian (*decaocto*) or African (*roseogrisea*), but we heard later that some of our fellow passengers had heard them calling like Eurasian. It was now getting quite late, but we still had time to call in at the Barragem de Poilão on the way back, and here we had great views of no less than five Bourne's Herons (two adults and three juveniles), an Intermediate Egret, 25 Eurasian Spoonbills and a Yellow Wagtail, as well as the two Black Herons again and at least 1,000 Western Cattle Egrets coming in to roost. By the time we left, it was beginning to get dark, and on the drive back to Praia we were lucky enough to see a Cape Verde (Barn) Owl flying across the road in the headlights. We ended the day with a convivial last supper at a very nice restaurant in town, and then headed out to the airport for our late-night flight. The trip back to the UK via Lisbon was far shorter and simpler than the outbound journey had been, and as we headed our separate ways from Heathrow, we could part cheerfully in the knowledge that this had surely been one of the greatest adventures of our lives.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

NUMIDIDAE

Helmeted Guineafowl (Introduced) *Numida meleagris*: Good views of a flock of 15 'wild' birds near the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago. We also saw a flock of piebald individuals on the outskirts of São Lourenço dos Orgãos which were much less convincing!

PHASIANIDAE

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*: Great views of about 15 flushed as we were walking about in the semi-desert near the airport on Santiago.

Common Pheasant (Introduced) *Phasianus colchicus* (NL): One was seen by Sally from the bus during our island tour on St Helena.

ANATIDAE

Black-necked Swan *Cygnus melanocorypha*: Good views of a group of three in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

Upland Goose *Chloephaga picta*: Common in the Ushuaia area.

Kelp Goose *Chloephaga hybrida*: Common along the shore in the Ushuaia area. The pure white male is striking, but the female is surely the most attractive goose in this genus.

Flying Steamer-Duck *Tachyeres patachonicus*: Good views of a party of four in Tierra del Fuego National Park and two or three near Ushuaia.

Fuegian Steamer-Duck (Flightless Steamer-Duck) *Tachyeres pteneres*: Good views of four in Tierra del Fuego National Park and about a dozen in the Ushuaia area.

Red Shoveler *Anas platalea*: Good views of a male and a female on the lake in Ushuaia.

Chiloe Wigeon (Southern Wigeon) *Anas sibilatrix*: Distant views of about 20 in Tierra del Fuego National Park, and much better views of about 20 in the Ushuaia area.

Speckled Teal *Anas flavirostris*: About 50 on the lake in Ushuaia. We also saw six in the harbour at Grytviken in South Georgia. This species is a recent arrival in South Georgia, and the tiny population of about 10 pairs is confined to the Cumberland Bay area.

Crested Duck *Anas specularioides*: Common in Tierra del Fuego National Park and around Ushuaia, and seen at extremely close range.

Spectacled Duck (Bronze-winged Duck) *Anas specularis*: Great views of a party of seven of these handsome ducks on the river near Lago Roca in Tierra del Fuego National Park. This species breeds at small lakes in the mountains and only occurs at low elevations in the park in autumn and winter.

South Georgia Pintail *Anas georgica*: Good views of five at Cooper Bay and a pair at Grytviken.

Yellow-billed Pintail (Brown Pintail) *Anas spinicauda*: Distant views of five in Tierra del Fuego National Park and much better views of five in the Ushuaia area the next day.

PODICIPEDIDAE

Great Grebe *Podilymbus major*: Great views of five in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

SPHENISCIDAE

King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*: We had close encounters with this impressive penguin at the small colony at Cooper Bay, where there were about 300 adults and chocolate-coloured chicks of various sizes, but we also had distant views of the large colony at Fortuna Bay and there was a lone individual on the beach at King Edward Point in Cumberland Bay. We came across a number at sea, including three in the northern Drake Passage, and saw our last on the day after leaving South Georgia.

- Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*: Given the appalling weather, we were perhaps fortunate to see three of these attractive little penguins on ice floes during our first day in the Antarctic Sound.
- Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua*: A common and widespread penguin at South Georgia, first encountered at close quarters at the colony at Cooper Bay and also found in good numbers at Stromness. We also found a few on the beach at Grytviken.
- Chinstrap Penguin *Pygoscelis antarctica*: First encountered at sea in the Scotia Sea, where this was much the commonest penguin, and then seen at close quarters on the rocks at Cooper Bay in South Georgia, where there is a small breeding colony.
- Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus*: Good views of at least 1,000 of these very fancy penguins at their breeding colony at Cooper Bay in South Georgia. Our best views were during the zodiac cruise, when we were able to approach within a few feet of several small groups of adults that had already completed their moult.
- Southern Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes [chrysocome] chrysocome*: Brief views of six or seven at sea in the northern Drake Passage. This is a common breeding bird in the Cape Horn archipelago and Falkland Islands, but numbers at the colonies in the Falklands have suffered a sharp decrease in recent years.
- Northern Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes [chrysocome] moseleyi*: Great views, from the zodiacs, of at least 1,000 at their breeding colonies on the steep slopes of Gough Island, where there are reckoned to be some 144,000 pairs. We also saw about 15, including several badly oiled birds, on the rocks at Nightingale Island and a single bird in the harbour at Tristan. Some 2,000 oiled birds had been rescued from Nightingale and were being cared for on Tristan.

DIOMEDEIDAE

- Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea [epomophora] epomophora*: Great views of at least 12, many of which came close to the ship, in the Drake Passage north of the Antarctic Convergence, and single birds on two occasions south of the Convergence en route to Gough. This form, with extensive white on the upper wing, breeds on Auckland and Campbell islands in New Zealand.
- Wandering Albatross (Snowy Albatross) *Diomedea [exulans] exulans*: Undoubtedly the special bird of the Southern Ocean. We encountered at least eight individuals in the Drake Passage, several of which followed the ship for some time, and then saw another nine in the Scotia Sea as we were approaching Cape Disappointment at the south-eastern tip of South Georgia. Our best views were of about 25 in the Bay of Isles on the north-west coast of South Georgia, where there are several breeding colonies. Once we had left South Georgia, numbers dwindled rapidly and our last definite 'Wanderers' were south of the Convergence on our second day at sea. (Confusion with the very similar Tristan Albatross then became a problem). Long-lining has certainly taken a horrendous toll of these magnificent birds. Numbers at the breeding colonies in South Georgia are decreasing at over 4% per annum, while the numbers encountered at sea appear to have decreased by over 50% since the mid-1990s.
- Tristan Albatross *Diomedea [exulans] dabbenena*: Many excellent views of these great albatrosses which closely resemble immature stages of the Wandering Albatross and are doubtfully distinguishable at sea. We reckoned we saw our first six birds on our fourth day at sea after leaving South Georgia (well north of the Convergence), and then recorded eight the next day and about 30 around Gough. The great bulk of the population of about 1,500 pairs breeds on Gough, and here at last we could be really convinced that we were seeing *dabbenena*. Our best views were of at least a dozen squabbling for scraps off the stern of the ship as we were 'chumming' off Gough. Thereafter, we saw only one as we were approaching Tristan and one as we were cruising between Tristan, Inaccessible and Nightingale.

- Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria fusca*: We saw our first – a dozen or so - during our first day at sea after leaving South Georgia and still well south of the Convergence, and then recorded small numbers each day until we arrived at Gough where there is a large breeding colony. The species was common in the Tristan group and there were still a few as we were sailing away from Tristan on our final day there, but these were our last. Not quite as striking as the next species, but a very attractive albatross nonetheless.
- Light-mantled Albatross (Light-mantled Sooty Albatross) *Phoebetria palpebrata*: In some ways the most elegant of the albatrosses, especially when flying in formation around their breeding sites on steep, tussocky hillsides. We saw our first two in the northern Drake Passage and then five in the southern Drake Passage the next day and small numbers in the Scotia Sea en route to South Georgia. Our best views were at Cooper Bay, where we watched two pairs circling over the hillsides, and at Grytviken, where there were also two pairs, but numbers dwindled rapidly after we left South Georgia and our last were two immature birds on our third day out, just north of the Convergence.
- Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche [chlororhynchos] chlororhynchos*: We did not see our first until our last day at sea before arriving at Gough, and there were only a few around Gough, but this was much the commonest albatross in the Tristan group, where there are some very large breeding colonies. Our best views were of birds squabbling for fish scraps at the stern of the ship as we lay at anchor off Edinburgh. There were a couple of very large chicks, almost ready to fledge, on Nightingale, and those of us who climbed up to the 'Base' on Tristan had close encounters with several more large chicks. We recorded 10 as we sailed away from Tristan in the evening and six the next day, but these were our last.
- Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche [melanophris] melanophris*: Much the most widespread of the albatrosses, first seen in the northern Drake Passage and then on most days at sea, except in the Antarctic Sound, until we reached Tristan da Cunha. Our biggest daily counts were about 50 in the northern Drake Passage and 30 on our final day at sea before arriving at Gough. There were relatively few around South Georgia, where the breeding season had ended. The last individuals were two during our second day at sea after leaving Tristan.
- Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma*: A very smart albatross, first encountered in the Drake Passage, where we logged 25 north of the Convergence and 10 south of the Convergence, and then seen in small numbers in the Scotia Sea (up to six in a day), off South Georgia and en route to Gough. Our last were four birds just north of the Convergence on the third day after leaving South Georgia.
- Shy/White-capped Albatross *Thalassarche [cauta] cauta/steady*: Close views of an immature bird following the ship for about an hour in the afternoon of our fifth day at sea after leaving South Georgia, when we were about 140 nautical miles southwest of Gough. The Shy Albatross *T. [cauta] cauta* and the virtually identical White-capped Albatross *T. [cauta] steady* breed on islands off Tasmania and New Zealand respectively, and are indistinguishable in the field. Indeed, until recently the validity of *steady* as a subspecies was open to doubt. The White-capped Albatross is much the commoner of the two forms and is known to occur in small numbers in the South Atlantic, but the possibility of the birds that we saw being Shy Albatrosses cannot be ruled out, as the non-breeding range of this form is poorly known.
- Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche [cauta] salvini* (NL): An albatross believed to be an immature Salvin's appeared around the ship briefly in the morning of our fifth day at sea after leaving South Georgia. This species breeds almost exclusively on the Bounties and Snares off New Zealand and disperses commonly to western South America, but is rare in the South Atlantic.

PROCELLARIIDAE

- Southern Giant-Petrel (Common Giant-Petrel) *Macronectes giganteus*: The more numerous of the two giant-petrels, first encountered in the Beagle Channel at Ushuaia and then recorded in good numbers almost daily until we left Tristan da Cunha. Around South Georgia and in the south, we found a number of wholly white adults (the Northern Giant-Petrel does not have a white phase, although some adults become quite pale). Some of our best views were off Gough, where about 50 came in to our 'chumming' and dominated the feeding frenzy off the stern of the ship. The birds breeding in the Tristan group are somewhat intermediate between *giganteus* and *halli*, having the bill colour of the former but showing some plumage characteristics of the latter.
- Northern Giant-Petrel (Hall's Giant-Petrel) *Macronectes halli*: At least one in the northern Drake Passage and then common around South Georgia, where there are some large breeding colonies. We saw our last two on our last day at sea before arriving at Gough.
- Southern Fulmar (Antarctic Fulmar) *Fulmarus glacialisoides*: We saw our first two in the northern Drake Passage, and then about 50 south of the Convergence the next day. There were half a dozen battling the storm in the Antarctic Sound, and at least 60 between the Bransfield Strait and Elephant Island, but numbers then decreased rapidly, and our last were four as we approached Cape Disappointment in South Georgia. An attractive bird, but not a patch on the Northern Fulmar.
- Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*: Great views of two individuals circling the ship, the first in the southern Drake Passage and the second in the Bransfield Strait. This can be a difficult bird to find in this area at this time of year.
- Cape Petrel (Pintado Petrel) *Daption capense*: First encountered in the northern Drake Passage and then recorded in good numbers almost daily until we reached Cape Disappointment in South Georgia. The highest daily count was 200 on two occasions in the Scotia Sea, and our last was a single bird on our second day out from South Georgia, still south of the Convergence.
- Lesser Snow Petrel *Pagodroma [nivea] nivea*: This very pretty little petrel was seen only in the far south and usually close to icebergs. We recorded 15 on our first day in the Antarctic Sound, 30 on the second day, and about 60 as we headed out of the Bransfield Strait towards Elephant Island.
- Kerguelen Petrel *Lugensa brevirostra*: Many great views of this subtly attractive petrel, often circling high over the sea in its wildly erratic flight. Our first were seven in the Drake Passage. We saw another ten in the Scotia Sea, over 30 en route to Gough, and a dozen near Gough, where there is a very large breeding colony, but the only one thereafter was a single bird between Tristan da Cunha and Inaccessible.
- Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*: First encountered just south of the Convergence en route to Gough, and then recorded daily in small numbers (maximum seven) until we were leaving the Tristan group. One on the second day after leaving Tristan da Cunha was the last.
- Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*: This very attractive petrel was common in the Southern Ocean from the region of the Convergence north to Tristan. We saw our first few (about 15) in the Drake Passage, about 65 in the Scotia Sea, at least 100 every day between South Georgia and Gough, and at least 250 as we cruised between Tristan da Cunha, Inaccessible and Nightingale. Numbers decreased rapidly as we headed north from Tristan, and we saw our last five on our second day out.
- Fea's Petrel (Cape Verde Petrel) *Pterodroma feae*: The last petrel of the trip. We saw our first two as we were approaching Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands, and had great views of half a dozen during the pelagic cruise off Fogo the next day.
- Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*: Another attractive gadfly petrel, first encountered just south of the Convergence on our first day at sea after leaving South Georgia and then seen commonly until we reached the Tristan group. Our highest daily tally was 50 on the day before we

arrived at Gough, and our last were single birds on the first and second days out from Tristan da Cunha.

- Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*: Many great sightings of these smart petrels, often cutting in close under the bow of the ship. We recorded about 15 in the Drake Passage, up to 100 in a day in the Scotia Sea, and about 200 as we were approaching Cape Disappointment in South Georgia, but the only others were one on our first day out from South Georgia and two on our second day.
- Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*: Close views of at least half a dozen of these small, pale-faced prions amongst the much commoner Antarctic Prions in the Scotia Sea as we were approaching South Georgia.
- Broad-billed Prion *Pachyptila vittata*: First identified convincingly on our fourth day out from South Georgia when we were well north of the Convergence, and then seen in thousands as we approached Gough. Our best views were around Gough, where there is a huge breeding colony. We saw a few birds as we were approaching Tristan da Cunha the next day, but these were our last.
- Antarctic Prion (Dove Prion) *Pachyptila desolata*: The common prion of the cold waters south of the Convergence. We saw our first few in the northern Drake Passage, then at least 30 in the southern Drake Passage, many thousands in the Scotia Sea and good numbers around South Georgia, where there are huge breeding colonies. Numbers dwindled rapidly as we cruised north towards Gough, and we saw our last on the day after crossing the Convergence.
- Slender-billed Prion (Thin-billed Prion) *Pachyptila belcheri*: Two in the Scotia Sea en route to South Georgia, and then none until ten on our first day out from South Georgia, ten on the second day out and four on the third day, just north of the Convergence. This is primarily a bird of subantarctic waters, breeding in large numbers in the Falkland Islands and Tierra del Fuego.
- Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*: A large and very distinctive petrel, but sadly one that seldom showed much interest in the ship. We saw our first six on our first day out from South Georgia, and then recorded small numbers (maximum 10) every day until we reached Gough. Our last were ten individuals as we headed northwest from Gough towards Tristan da Cunha.
- White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*: Fairly common in the Drake Passage and Scotia Sea (up to 30 in a day), and recorded in similar numbers around South Georgia, where there are large breeding colonies. We recorded 40 on our first day at sea after leaving South Georgia, but numbers then decreased rapidly and the last was a single bird as we were sailing away from Gough.
- Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata*: Our first was a single bird south of the Convergence on our second day out from South Georgia. From then on, we recorded the species every day until the day before we arrived in St Helena, with the highest count of at least 80 coming during our day of cruising between Tristan, Inaccessible and Nightingale. This species was a regular follower in our wake, with some individuals staying with us for an hour or more. Several birds followed us almost as far as the Tropic of Capricorn (23°27'S), and one bird appeared briefly the next day, when we were well inside the Tropics. This strikingly marked petrel is known to breed only on Inaccessible Island, and the total population is thought to number only 2,500-10,000 individuals. It is listed as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International because of its tiny breeding range, small population size and high mortality from long-lining.
- Westland Petrel *Procellaria westlandica*: One appeared briefly at the stern of the ship in the northern Drake Passage and was identified from photographs taken by some of the other birders on board. This species, which breeds only in southern New Zealand, is known to wander occasionally to the waters off South America.
- Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris [diomedea] diomedea*: We saw our first two individuals on the day before we arrived at Ascension, and then recorded them commonly until our last day at

sea before arriving at the Cape Verde Islands. The highest count was 60 on our fourth day out from Ascension, when we came across several feeding flocks.

- Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris [diomedea] edwardsii*: Good views of three as we were approaching Santiago for the first time, and then at least 500 around Fogo and Brava the next day. The size difference between this form and Cory's was not as apparent as we had anticipated, but the Cape Verde Shearwaters certainly appeared lighter in build with much slimmer and duller bills.
- Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*: Rather few this year, presumably because most birds had already departed for the North Atlantic. We saw a couple in the northern Drake Passage, half a dozen en route to Gough, one en route to St Helena and one on the day before we arrived in the Cape Verdes.
- Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*: A very common shearwater in the seas around Gough and Tristan da Cunha, where almost the entire population of about five million pairs breeds. We encountered our first few individuals in the seas around South Georgia, and recorded them daily in increasing numbers as we headed north towards Gough. Our highest tally was about 500 as we cruised between the islands in the Tristan group, but numbers dwindled surprisingly rapidly as we headed north from Tristan, with only one being seen on our first day out and the last – two individuals – on our second day out.
- Subantarctic Shearwater *Puffinus elegans*: Our first came early, on our first day out from South Georgia when we were still well south of the Convergence. We recorded five on our fourth day out, 15 on the day before we arrived at Gough and at least 30 as we were sailing away from Gough, but the only ones thereafter were seven individuals between Tristan, Inaccessible and Nightingale. This species breeds in large numbers on Gough and Inaccessible.
- Boyd's Shearwater *Puffinus boydi*: One in the evening of our last day at sea before arriving in the Cape Verde Islands, four as we were approaching Santiago, and about 50 in the seas around Fogo and Brava. A tiny shearwater with a distinctive fluttering flight.
- Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*: A widespread bird of the tropical Atlantic, but much less common this year than in 2009. We encountered our first near St Helena, then three on the way to Ascension, about 25 between Ascension and the Cape Verdes, and two between Fogo and Brava. The birds seemed to be wary of the ship, but one or two gave close views as they came up off the sea in front of us.

HYDROBATIDAE

- Black-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta tropica*: First encountered in the northern Drake Passage (five) and then seen commonly in the southern Drake Passage, Scotia Sea and South Georgia. Our highest daily tally was 35 in the eastern Scotia Sea. Numbers dwindled rapidly as we sailed away from South Georgia, and we saw our last individual the day after crossing the Convergence en route to Tristan.
- White-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta grallaria*: The common storm-petrel in subantarctic waters north to the Tristan group, where there are large breeding colonies. We saw our first ten on the day before we crossed the Convergence (when there were still a few Black-bellied Storm-Petrels around for comparison), and numbers then increased to 40 in a day as we cruised between Gough and Tristan da Cunha. There were still quite a few about as we headed north from Tristan, and we recorded as many as 20 on our second day out and four on the day we entered the Tropics. The last was a single bird on our fourth day out, when we were only about 250 nautical miles south of St Helena.
- Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*: First encountered in the northern Drake Passage (20) and then seen fairly commonly in the cold waters south of the Convergence, with the highest count being 35 off the north coast of South Georgia. However, we saw only four between South Georgia and Tristan, and then none until we were crossing the equator, when we came across four or five migrants heading north.

Grey-backed Storm-Petrel *Garrodia nereis*: We did well this year, seeing one in the southern Drake Passage, five on the way from South Georgia to Gough and one between Gough and Tristan da Cunha. Our best views were of a bird coming in to 'chumming' as we were leaving Gough. This small and inconspicuous storm-petrel seems actively to avoid ships and is easily overlooked.

White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*: This is another storm-petrel that seems to avoid ships and can be easily overlooked. We saw our first on our second day out from Tristan da Cunha, when we were still south of the Tropic of Capricorn, then three individuals between St Helena and Ascension and one as we were approaching Fogo in the early morning.

Madeiran Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*: Our first two were seen just north of the Tropic of Capricorn on the day before we arrived in St Helena. The species was quite common around St Helena, where we recorded up to 17 in a day and had some great views. We recorded ten as we were sailing away from St Helena and five the next day, but the only others were three on our first day at sea after leaving Ascension.

Leach's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*: Our first encounter with this species was on the day before we arrived at Ascension, when we recorded at least 30. It was then the commonest bird at sea all the way to the Cape Verde Island, with counts of up to 300 in a day. The birds were often in small groups sitting on the water, and gave close views as they took off in front of the bow.

PELECANOIDIDAE

Common Diving-Petrel (Subantarctic Diving-Petrel) *Pelecanoides urinatrix*: Small numbers of diving-petrels, mostly if not all this species, were encountered in the Drake Passage, and large numbers were seen in the eastern Scotia Sea and around South Georgia. Small numbers were recorded on the way to Gough, and three birds were seen between Gough and Tristan, but these were our last. There are large breeding colonies of this species on Gough and in the Tristan group, but the breeding season had ended and most birds had dispersed out to sea.

South Georgia Diving-Petrel (Georgian Diving-Petrel) *Pelecanoides georgicus*: At least four were seen well, including one bird sitting on the water, as we rounded Cape Disappointment and passed Cooper Island at the south-eastern tip of South Georgia. The identification of this species at sea is always a great challenge and is best achieved from the bow of the ship, as the birds rise up off the water from almost underneath.

PHAETHONTIDAE

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*: Our first was a bird that joined the ship briefly when we were still over 200 nautical miles south of St Helena. The species was fairly common at St Helena, where we had counts of up to 15 in a day and watched several pairs visiting their nest sites on the cliffs near Jamestown, and we also saw a pair at Boatswain Bird Island off Ascension. We recorded two on our first day out from Ascension, and had extraordinary views of two birds (an adult and an immature) that spent over an hour 'exploring' the ship on our last day at sea before reaching the Cape Verdes. We also saw one as we were approaching Santiago in the Cape Verdes.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*: Superb views of about 15 at Boatswain Bird Island off Ascension, including several birds sitting on their nests. The breeding colony here is said to number over 1,000 pairs. We also recorded a single bird as we were leaving Ascension in the evening and a single bird at sea the next day.

FREGATIDAE

Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*: We encountered our first four frigatebirds, presumably this species, following a large feeding flock of Sooty Terns far out at sea on the day before we arrived at Ascension, and then had wonderful views of at least 1,000 at the breeding

colony on Boatswain Bird Island. We also saw about 20 birds drifting lazily back and forth over the main island the next day. The world population of this species is thought to number only 10,000-12,000 individuals, and all breed on Boatswain Bird Island. It is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of the possibility that feral cats might get to the island.

SULIDAE

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*: Fairly common in inshore waters around St Helena and seen well at the colony on Speery Island, where we found about 20 birds. Common around Ascension and nesting in large numbers on the flat top of Boatswain Bird Island. We also saw about 200 as we sailed away from Ascension in the evening, but only two the next day and none thereafter.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*: Great views of about 15, including a few of the brown morph, at the breeding colony on Boatswain Bird Island off Ascension. One was seen at sea as we were leaving Ascension and another appeared around the ship the next day. One was also recorded during the cruise in the "Gannet" at St Helena, but most of us missed it.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*: We missed them at St Helena this year, but had superb views of about 200 at the breeding colony on Boatswain Bird Island, and saw about 20 at sea as we were leaving Ascension. We also saw about 20 with the large feeding flocks of sea-birds off Fogo Island in the Cape Verdes, and one in Praia harbour on our last day.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Neotropic Cormorant (Olivaceous Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*: Eight along the coast in the Ushuaia area.

Rock Shag (Rock Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax magellanicus*: Good views of two at Lapataia Bay in Tierra del Fuego National Park and three in Ushuaia harbour.

Imperial Shag (Imperial Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax atriceps*: Common in Ushuaia harbour and the Beagle Channel, and also seen at Lapataia Bay in Tierra del Fuego National Park. Most individuals were of the dark-cheeked form 'albiventer' (King Shag), but there were a few of the white-cheeked form 'atriceps' (Blue-eyed Shag) in Ushuaia harbour.

South Georgia Shag (South Georgia Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax georgianus*: Common in inshore waters around South Georgia, and seen well on several occasions. We recorded up to 50 in a day.

ARDEIDAE

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: An adult and two immature birds in the harbour at Ushuaia. These birds belong to the very dark race *obscurus* which is confined to southern South America and the Falklands.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*: One at the dam on Santiago on our first visit, and one at a small pond on the outskirts of Praia on our second visit. This is a very scarce migrant in the Cape Verde Islands.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: Much to our surprise, a Cattle Egret appeared around the ship in the early morning of our third day at sea after leaving the Antarctic Sound, when we were still about 270 nautical miles SSW of South Georgia. The bird came and went a few times, but eventually, at about mid-day, it landed on the ship and took up residence. Attempts were made by the crew to feed it, but it was in an emaciated condition, and four days later it was found dead. The five Cattle Egrets that we found at Deadwood Plain on St Helena and the two on the turtle beach on Ascension were also lost migrants, but at least they had a chance of survival if they stayed put! The species is obviously now well established in the Cape Verde Islands as we saw at least 1,000 coming to roost at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago, and also found a few on Fogo.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: At least four at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands.

Bourne's Heron (Cape Verde Purple Heron) *Ardea bournei*: Superb views of three recently fledged juveniles at the colony near Liberão during our first visit to Santiago, and good views of two adults and three juveniles at the Barragem de Poilão on our second visit. The entire population of this close relative of the Purple Heron *A. purpurea* probably numbers fewer than 20 pairs all of which nest in the large mahogany tree at Liberão.

Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed Egret) *Mesophoyx intermedia*: Good views of one at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago on our second visit – a rare vagrant to the Cape Verde Islands from West Africa.

Black Heron (Black Egret) *Egretta ardesiaca*: Much the most surprising find of the trip. We were amazed to discover two of these very distinctive African herons at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago on our first visit. Great views (and many photos) were obtained, and those of our fellow passengers who were also touring the island were alerted. However, we later heard that the birds had been around for some time, and had already been 'twitched' by some of the Western Palearctic's biggest listers. Furthermore, these were not the first Black Herons in the Cape Verde Islands. One other had been seen on Boa Vista as long ago as 1985 – also by a Birdquest group!

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: About a dozen at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands.

Western Reef Egret (Western Reef Heron) *Egretta gularis*: Great views of a single dark-phase bird at a small lagoon near Pedra Badejo on Santiago – yet another rare vagrant in the Cape Verde Islands. This bird had been discovered two days previously by our fellow birders from the *Plancius*.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: Great views of at least 25 at the Barragem de Poilão on our second visit. This species is a regular winter visitor in small numbers to the Cape Verde Islands.

CATHARTIDAE

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*: A single bird on a roof-top in Ushuaia on our final morning in Tierra del Fuego.

Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus*: Good views of eight adults soaring over the peaks during our excursion to Tierra del Fuego National Park. The condor is still quite a common bird in Tierra del Fuego.

ACCIPITRIDAE

Chilean Hawk *Accipiter [bicolour] chilensis*: Extraordinary close-up views of a very tame immature bird perched in full view near Lapataia in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*: Distant views of four in Tierra del Fuego National Park, and superb views of four, including two juveniles, at the municipal rubbish tip near Ushuaia.

Cape Verde Buzzard *Buteo [buteo] bannermani*: Distant views of a soaring bird over the peaks near São Jorge dos Orgãos and much better views of another over the wooded hills near Liberão on Santiago.

FALCONIDAE

Southern Crested-Caracara *Caracara plancus*: Fairly common in Tierra del Fuego National Park and the Ushuaia area, and much in evidence at the municipal rubbish tip.

White-throated Caracara *Phalco boenus albogularis*: Good views of nine at the municipal rubbish tip near Ushuaia.

Chimango Caracara *Milvago chimango*: Very common in the Ushuaia area and Tierra del Fuego National Park.

Alexander's Kestrel *Falco [tinnunculus] alexandri*: Great views of 12 on Santiago on our first visit, eight on Fogo and about 20 on Santiago on our second visit. Like the Cape Verde Buzzard, this is not a very convincing 'split'.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*: One in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

RALLIDAE

Inaccessible Island Rail *Atlantisia rogersi*: Definitely the avian highlight of the tour. Our views were not fantastic, but after a bit of a struggle, we eventually had close views of an adult creeping about in the tussock grass behind the beach on Inaccessible Island. The bird called back in response to playback, but was presumably reluctant to come out into the open because of the passing Tristan Skuas. This species, the total population of which has been estimated at about 8,400 individuals, is listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of the risk that the island will be colonised by mammalian predators, particularly Black Rat *Rattus rattus*, which has had such a devastating effect on the breeding birds on Tristan.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: At least six, including a couple of juveniles, at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands.

Gough Moorhen *Gallinula [nesiotis] comeri*: Good views, from the zodiacs, of six amongst the tussock grass and penguin colonies on the lower slopes of Gough Island. There were thought to be 4,250 pairs of this species on Gough in 1983 and at least 250 pairs on Tristan da Cunha, where it was introduced in 1956. This species is also listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of the risk of accidental introduction of rats. (The Tristan Moorhen *G. [nesiotis] nesiotis* is generally believed to have become extinct by the end of the 19th Century because of a combination of predation by Black Rats and feral cats, destruction of habitat and hunting by islanders).

CHARADRIIDAE

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*: Common around Ushuaia where we recorded about 30.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*: Four at the coastal lagoons near Pedra Badejo on Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands.

St Helena Plover (Wirebird) *Charadrius sanctaehelenae*: Great views of at least eight including a pair with two small chicks and a bird at the nest in the grassland on Deadwood Plain in St Helena. This small plover, a close relative of the common and widespread Kittlitz's Plover *C. pecuarius* of Africa, is critically endangered because of changes to the habitat and predation, especially by feral cats. The total population was estimated at only about 400 adults in January 2010, down from 450 in 1988-1989 and 435 in 2001.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*: Three at the coastal lagoons near Pedra Badejo on Santiago.

Rufous-chested Dotterel *Charadrius modestus*: Great views of a party of 12 on the shore near the Tolkeyen Hotel in Ushuaia.

HAEMATOPODIDAE

Blackish Oystercatcher *Haematopus ater*: Good views of five on the shore near the Tolkeyen Hotel and two near Ushuaia the next day.

Magellanic Oystercatcher *Haematopus leucopodus*: Good views of one on the shore near the Tolkeyen Hotel in Ushuaia.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Two at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago on our first visit, and at least six there on our second visit.

CHIONIDIDAE

Pale-faced Sheathbill (Snowy Sheathbill) *Chionis alba*: One appeared briefly around the ship on our first day in the Antarctic Sound, and two visited the ship as we were cruising out of the Bransfield Strait. Our best views, however, were at Cooper Bay where there were about 60 walking about amongst the penguins and fur seals.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: We heard one flying over as we were approaching Fogo, and saw two on Santiago on our second visit.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Two at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago on both our visits.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Three at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago on our first visit and six on our second visit.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Three at the coastal lagoons near Pedra Badejo on Santiago.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*: One on the beach in Praia harbour, one on the beach at São Filipe on Fogo, and four at the coastal lagoons near Pedra Badejo on Santiago.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*: Very close views of eight on the shore near the Hotel Tolkeyen in Ushuaia.

STERCORARIIDAE

Chilean Skua *Catharacta chilensis*: About 10 in Tierra del Fuego National Park and another ten in the Ushuaia area. The most richly coloured of the large skuas and one of the most distinctive.

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*: Reasonable views of two intermediate-phase birds in the Bransfield Strait and superb views of a pale-phase bird that circled the ship many times on our second day at sea after leaving St Helena. This is a slightly smaller, slimmer and more athletic bird than the tank-like Subantarctic Skuas and a long-distance migrant.

Subantarctic Skua (Brown Skua) *Catharacta [antarctica] lonnbergi*: The common skua south of the Antarctic Convergence, first encountered in the Drake Passage and then recorded in small numbers in the Bransfield Strait and Scotia Sea and in good numbers in South Georgia. Many of the birds in South Georgia were remarkably tame, allowing approach to within a few feet. We recorded small numbers of large skuas on all five days of the voyage from South Georgia to Gough, but where the Subantarctic Skuas ended and the Tristan Skuas began was not clear!

Tristan Skua *Catharacta [antarctica] hamiltoni*: Fairly common around Gough and in the Tristan da Cunha group, with up to 15 recorded in a day. Our last were five birds on Tristan itself, and we saw none further north.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*: At least two immature birds were seen on several occasions at St Helena, including one during the cruise in the "Gannet", but the only other was an adult pale-phase bird with full tail-streamers north of the equator en route to the Cape Verde Islands.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*: At least three individuals were recorded at sea between Ascension and the Cape Verde Islands.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*: Our first were two immature birds north of the Convergence en route to Gough. We did not see any more until we were had left Ascension, but then recorded them every day until we reached the Cape Verde Islands, and had counts of up to 12 in a day. On several occasions the skuas were accompanying feeding flocks of Sooty Terns, but we also watched them harassing Leach's Storm-Petrels.

LARIDAE

Brown-hooded Gull *Larus maculipennis*: About 15 at the lake in Ushuaia and two or three in the harbour.

Dolphin Gull *Larus scoresbii*: Good views of at least 20 of these very attractive gulls in Ushuaia harbour.

- Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*: Abundant in Tierra del Fuego, a few in the Antarctic Sound and common in South Georgia.
- Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*: Good views of an immature bird flying around Praia harbour in Santiago, shortly before we disembarked from the *Plancius* for the last time. The form concerned is most likely to be *atlantis* which breeds in Madeira, the Azores and the Canary Islands.
- Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*: Superb views of an adult in full breeding plumage hanging about the ship as we lay at anchor off Tristan da Cunha on our second visit. The bird was discovered by Jacqui while the rest of us were ashore, but obligingly stayed around until most of us had returned to the ship. This species, which breeds on the Canadian prairies and winters along the western coast of South America, is only a vagrant in the South Atlantic, but has been recorded in Tristan da Cunha before.
- Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*: We may have seen a few in the Scotia Sea and en route to Tristan da Cunha, but separation of this species from Antarctic Tern at sea is not easy. We saw our first definite Arctic Tern on our first full day at sea after leaving Tristan da Cunha, and then recorded small numbers on most days at sea until we reached St Helena. North of St Helena, numbers increased rapidly, and we recorded over 300 during our first full day north of the equator. The biggest concentration, however, was between Fogo and Brava in the Cape Verde Islands, where there were several large feeding flocks totalling about 1,000. Obviously the spring migration was still in full swing.
- Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*: We managed to spot four on our first day in the Antarctic Sound, despite the awful weather, and then saw about 30 in the Bransfield Strait, up to 25 in a day around South Georgia, about 25 around Gough and about 40 in the Tristan da Cunha group. The recently fledged juveniles, with their copious brown barring, were especially nice.
- Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*: Our first was a bird at sea as we were approaching St Helena, and we spotted another at the small breeding colony on Speery Island the next day. On our second day out from St Helena, we encountered a feeding flock of about 250 Sooty Terns, accompanied by several frigatebirds, and on Ascension, we had close views of several hundred birds at one of the large breeding colonies at Wideawake Fairs. The birds had only recently returned to the colony and had not yet started to breed. Numbers decreased rapidly as we sailed north from Ascension, and we saw our last feeding flocks around the equator on our second day out.
- Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*: A single bird in breeding plumage appeared amongst a large feeding flock of Arctic Terns off Fogo as we were leaving in the evening. This is another rare vagrant to the Cape Verde Islands.
- White Tern (Fairy Tern) *Gygis alba*: Very common on St Helena, even in Jamestown and the interior of the island, and also at Ascension, where we had some close views of birds nesting on the cliffs at Boatswain Bird Island.
- Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*: We saw our first four from the zodiacs as we explored Penguin Island just off the coast of Gough. This is the most southerly breeding station of this 'tropical' species in the Atlantic and, somewhat bizarrely, overlaps with the breeding range of the Antarctic Tern. We did not see Brown Noddies again until we were arriving at St Helena, and here we found them in large numbers, particularly during the trip to Speery Island in the "Gannet". We also found good numbers at Ascension, and had superb views of a pair with a large chick near the Sooty Tern colony at Wideawake Fairs. We saw about 30 as we were sailing away from Ascension in the evening, but these were our last.
- Black Noddy *Anous minutus*: Very common around St Helena, where they were nesting in large numbers on Speery Island and nearby islets, and abundant at Boatswain Bird Island off Ascension, where we had close views of at least a thousand on the cliff ledges.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Dove *Columba livia*: Feral pigeons were common on St Helena. In the Cape Verde Islands, the status of the Rock Doves is uncertain. We saw good numbers of Rock Doves that may be the descendents of a dark endemic form, but there were many obvious feral pigeons mixed in with them, and it may be that all the pigeons in the Cape Verdes are descendents of introduced stock.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: About 25 in coastal scrub at Pedra Badejo on Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands. These birds had been discovered two days earlier by some of our fellow passengers from the *Plancius* and had been the subject of much debate. Some of the observers thought that they were African Collared Doves *S. roseogrisea*, but at least one observer heard them giving the typical call of Eurasian Collared Dove which should put the identification beyond doubt. Unfortunately, the views we had were very poor and we did not hear any calls.

Zebra Dove (Introduced) *Geopelia striata*: Fairly common and very tame on St Helena.

PSITTACIDAE

Austral Parakeet *Enicognathus ferrugineus*: Brief views of a noisy pair that flew across the track near the ski lift below the Martial Glacier in Tierra del Fuego.

TYTONIDAE

Cape Verde Owl (Cape Verde Barn Owl) *Tyto detorta*: Good views of one in the headlights as we were driving back from the Barragem de Poilão to Praia on our last evening on Santiago. This is certainly a very dark bird compared to most Barn Owls.

STRIGIDAE

Austral Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium nanum* (H): One was heard calling in response to playback in the beech forest in Tierra del Fuego National Park, but refused to show itself.

APODIDAE

Common Swift *Apus apus* (NL): One was seen by a number of birders, including Gary and Marlene, over Georgetown during the early morning turtle expedition on Ascension Island. The Common Swift has occurred on Ascension in the past, but only as an extremely rare vagrant.

Cape Verde Swift (Alexander's Swift) *Apus alexandri*: Distant views of 12 on Santiago on our first visit and five on Fogo the next day, but great views of ten on Santiago on our second visit, notably at the old city and in the Serra Malagueta. As its name implies, this species is confined to the Cape Verde Islands.

TROCHILIDAE

Green-backed Firecrown *Sephanoides sephanoides*: Good views of a single bird coming to feed at a 'flame tree' at Lapataia Bay in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

ALCEDINIDAE

Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*: Common and conspicuous on Santiago, where we recorded about 50 on both our visits, and Fogo, where we recorded about 20. A colourful kingfisher, here occupying a variety of niches.

PICIDAE

Magellanic Woodpecker *Campephilus magellanicus*: Fantastic views of a pair in the *Nothofagus* beech forest near Lapataia in Tierra del Fuego National Park. Why the birds are so tame in this area is a mystery.

FURNARIIDAE

Bar-winged Cinclodes *Cinclodes fuscus*: Good views of a couple in Tierra del Fuego National Park and three in the Ushuaia area.

Dark-bellied Cinclodes *Cinclodes antarcticus*: Great views of three along the shore in Tierra del Fuego National Park and three in Ushuaia harbour.

Thorn-tailed Rayadito *Aphrastura spinicauda*: This attractive little furnarid was very common in the forest in Tierra del Fuego National Park and responded well to 'pishing'. We also heard them calling in the forest below the Martial Glacier.

White-throated Treerunner *Pygarrhichas albugularis*: Good views of a single bird and a pair in the forest in Tierra del Fuego National Park, and heard in the forest below the Martial Glacier.

TYRANNIDAE

Fire-eyed Diucon *Xolmis pyrope*: Excellent views of about 15 in Tierra del Fuego National Park, and also seen in the forest below the Martial Glacier.

Tufted Tit-Tyrant *Anairetes parulus*: Reasonable views of three at Lapataia in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant *Muscisaxicola macloviana*: Superb views of eight on the moraine below the Martial Glacier – the only birds that we saw up near the glacier.

CORVIDAE

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*: Great views on several occasions in the Cape Verde Islands. We recorded 11 on our first visit to Santiago, four on Fogo and six on our second visit to Santiago.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Common House Martin *Delichon urbica*: One appeared around the ship in the evening of our second day at sea after leaving Ascension, when we were about 20 nautical miles north of the equator. It stayed around until after sunset and probably roosted on the ship, but was not seen the next morning. David saw another in São Filipe on Fogo in the Cape Verde Islands.

ALAUDIDAE

Bar-tailed (Desert) Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*: Good scope views of a single individual in the desert near the airport on Santiago, after quite a lengthy search. The birds in the Cape Verdes belong to the nominate race which is endemic to the islands.

Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark (Black-crowned Finch-Lark) *Eremopterix nigriceps*: Great views of about a dozen in the desert near the airport on our first visit to Santiago, and about a dozen near the old city on our second visit. As with the Bar-tailed Lark, these birds were of the nominate race which is endemic to the Cape Verde Islands.

SYLVIIDAE

Cape Verde (Cane) Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis*: Easily found on Santiago, where we saw three pairs in a bushy valley at São Lourenço dos Orgãos and another two pairs near the botanic gardens at São Jorge dos Orgãos. The birds responded well to playback and gave fantastic views. Although an *Acrocephalus* warbler, this Cape Verdes endemic in many ways behaves more like a *Hippolais*.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*: Common in the dry woodland and cultivation on Santiago and Fogo, and seen very well on several occasions.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: Very common on Santiago and Fogo.

TROGLODYTIDAE

Grass Wren *Cistothorus platensis*: Great views of one at Lapataia in Tierra del Fuego National Park and another by the lake in Ushuaia.

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*: Three in Tierra del Fuego National Park and a couple in Ushuaia.

STURNIDAE

Common Myna (Introduced) *Acridotheres tristis*: Very common on St Helena and also on Ascension, where it was much the most conspicuous land-bird.

TURDIDAE

Austral Thrush *Turdus falcklandii*: Very few this year, presumably because the bulk of the population had already departed on the autumn migration. We saw only one in Tierra del Fuego National Park and four on the way up to the Martial Glacier.

Tristan Thrush *Nesocichla eremita*: Fearing that we might not be able to land on Inaccessible or Nightingale, our first task on landing on Tristan da Cunha was to look for the Tristan Thrush at a locality near the settlement that we had discovered during the Atlantic Odyssey in 2009. It did not take us long to find a very obliging bird in one of the lowest patches of *Phylica arborea* woodland and we heard another calling nearby. This was a great find, but we need not have worried. Next day we had extraordinarily close views of about 50 on the beach and in the tussock grass on Inaccessible Island, and good views of about 15 from the zodiacs as we explored the coast of Nightingale. Thus we ended up seeing all three subspecies: nominate *eremita* on Tristan, *gordoni* on Inaccessible and *procax* on Nightingale.

MOTACILLIDAE

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: Good scope views of a female at the Barragem de Poilão on Santiago on our last day. This is yet another very scarce migrant in the Cape Verde Islands.

Correndera Pipit *Anthus correndera* (NL): One seen by Martin senior near the Tolkeyen Hotel in Ushuaia.

South Georgia Pipit *Anthus antarcticus*: Easily found at this time of year. Our first were three birds that flew out and circled the ship as we were cruising into Cooper Bay, and then we had great views of about half a dozen on the rocks in Cooper Bay. The birds were extremely tame and we had some very close looks from the zodiacs. This endemic passerine was once widespread in South Georgia, but is now confined to a small number of rat-free islands and rat-free enclaves on the south coast. Contrary to popular belief, it is not the most southerly passerine in the world – even the House Sparrows in Ushuaia are living farther south!

EMBERIZIDAE

Patagonian Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus patagonicus*: Good views of about 12 in Tierra del Fuego National Park and 15 in the forest below the Martial Glacier.

Gough Bunting (Gough Island Finch) *Rowettia goughensis*: About a dozen were seen from the zodiacs as we were cruising along the shore of Gough. Most were quite distant, but a group of three or four gave good views on Penguin Island.

Tristan Bunting *Nesospiza acunhae*: Superb views of about eight very confiding individuals of the nominate form *acunhae* on the beach and in the tussock grass on Inaccessible Island, and almost equally good views of about 20 of the more brightly coloured form *questi* foraging on the rocks just above the high-water mark on Nightingale. The nominate form is the form that formerly occurred on Tristan da Cunha. The form *questi* on Nightingale, Middle and Stoltenhoff islands is regarded by some authors as a separate species, the Nightingale Island Bunting.

Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis*: Only half a dozen in Tierra del Fuego National Park. The scarcity of Rufous-collared Sparrows in the Ushuaia area (where this is much the commonest bird in summer) would suggest that the southernmost populations of this species are migratory.

ICTERIDAE

Austral Blackbird *Curaeus curaeus*: Good views of a party of seven in Tierra del Fuego National Park and three at the municipal rubbish tip near Ushuaia.

Long-tailed Meadowlark *Sturnella loyca*: Good views of a party of 15 near the lake in Ushuaia.

PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow (Introduced) *Passer domesticus*: Common in Ushuaia.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*: Fairly common, especially around towns and villages, on Santiago, and very common on Fogo, where we saw at least 100.

Iago Sparrow (Cape Verde Sparrow) *Passer iagoensis*: About 20 seen well on Santiago on our first visit and half a dozen on our second visit, but much less common and conspicuous than the larger Spanish Sparrows and more a bird of the dry woodland. Our best views were at the botanic gardens at São Jorge dos Orgãos. This is another Cape Verde endemic.

PLOCEIDAE

Madagascar Fody (Introduced) *Foudia madagascariensis*: Common on St Helena, mostly in the uplands.

ESTRILDIDAE

Common Waxbill (Introduced) *Estrilda astrild*: Fairly common on St Helena, especially around Jamestown; common on Ascension, and abundant on Santiago in the Cape Verdes.

Java Sparrow (Introduced) *Padda oryzivora*: Common on St Helena, even down by the pier.

FRINGILLIDAE

Yellow Canary (Introduced) *Serinus flaviventris*: Common on St Helena, mostly in the uplands, and common on Ascension.

MAMMALS

European Rabbit (Introduced) *Oryctolagus cunicillus*: Four in Tierra del Fuego National Park, a dozen or so on St Helena and three on Ascension.

Western House Mouse (Introduced) *Mus domesticus* (NL): One was seen by Martin senior on Tristan da Cunha.

Antarctic Fur Seal *Arctocephalus gazella*: Half a dozen in the Antarctic Sound, a few in the Scotia Sea and many thousands in South Georgia, where the populations have recovered completely from the depredations of sealers in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Fortunately, the mating season was over and the big males had lost all their aggressiveness, but many of the pups could not resist giving us a snarl or two.

Subantarctic Fur Seal *Arctocephalus tropicalis*: A very attractive and distinctive fur seal, present in large numbers on the rocky shores of Gough, Inaccessible and Nightingale. Our closest views were on Inaccessible, where the tussock grass behind the beach was full of them.

Southern Elephant Seal *Mirounga leonina*: Close views of about 30 on the beach in Cooper Bay and three on the beach at Stromness in South Georgia. We also saw a couple on the shore at Gough Island.

Fin Whale *Balaenoptera physalis*: Rather distant views of three groups totalling about 10 individuals in the Scotia Sea en route to South Georgia, and much better views of a single individual north of the Convergence en route to Gough. Most of the large blows seen way off in the distance in the Southern Ocean probably belonged to this species.

- Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaengliae*: Great views of a group of five passing close to the ship during our first day in the Antarctic Sound.
- Sperm Whale *Physeter macrocephalus*: Two individuals blowing way off in the distance on our second day at sea after leaving St Helena, and at least six individuals just south of the equator, including two which allowed very close approach and gave fantastic views.
- Dwarf Sperm Whale *Kogia simus*: Six near the equator on our second day at sea after leaving Ascension and four the next day. All were in pairs and two allowed very close approach and gave fantastic views as they 'logged' at the surface. This is indeed a dwarf whale, no bigger than a Bottle-nosed Dolphin.
- Blainville's Beaked Whale *Mesoplodon densirostris*: Excellent views of a pod of four that surfaced several times close to the ship just after we had crossed the equator. On one occasion, the big male raised most of his head out of the water revealing his strange jaw-line and protruding teeth.
- Southern Bottlenose Whale *Hyperoodon planifrons*: Close but brief views of a single individual in the southern Drake Passage and two individuals in the Scotia Sea. Sadly, only a few of us were at the right place at the right time to catch them.
- Cuvier's Beaked Whale *Ziphius cavirostris*: Another elusive creature that showed only briefly. We saw a couple on our first day out from Ascension and two more near the equator the next day. (There were quite a few other sightings of beaked whales during our journey north through the Atlantic, but identification of these poorly known species is notoriously difficult at sea, especially as there may still be species out there that have yet to be described).
- Killer Whale (Orca) *Orcinus orca*: Great views of a pod of eight loafing at the surface in the morning of our first day at sea after leaving Ascension. The captain stopped the ship and we were able to watch the whales for about 20 minutes before they eventually moved off.
- False Killer Whale *Pseudorca crassidens*: Good views of a pod of 10 dashing through the waves ahead of the ship as we were approaching Tristan da Cunha, and distant views of a pod of at least four small black whales, almost certainly this species, near the Tropic of Capricorn.
- Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin (Bottlenose Dolphin) *Tursiops truncatus*: Good views of a school of ten that appeared briefly alongside the ship on our second day out from St Helena, and close views of about six off Boatswain Bird Island and four off Georgetown in Ascension.
- Hourglass Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus cruciger*: Seen well alongside the ship or riding the bow-wave on several occasions south of the Antarctic Convergence. Our first were a group of five in the southern Drake Passage; we saw a group of four and two groups of five in the Scotia Sea, a group of three near Cape Disappointment in South Georgia, a single individual on our first day out from South Georgia and two individuals on our second day out. This is surely one of the most attractive dolphins.
- Pantropical Spotted Dolphin *Stenella attenuata*: Wonderful views of two large schools of these very acrobatic dolphins: a school of about 250 during our trip out in the "Gannet" at St Helena, and a school of about 200 off Fogo in the Cape Verde Islands. We also saw a school of about 60 in the open ocean, on our second day out from St Helena.
- Clymene Dolphin (Short-snouted Spinner Dolphin) *Stenella clymene*: Close but brief views of a group of at least six moving quickly past the ship in the early morning of our second day at sea after leaving St Helena.
- Spinner Dolphin (Long-snouted Spinner Dolphin) *Stenella longirostris*: Our first encounter with these amazing acrobats was just south of the equator, on our second day out from St Helena, when we came across a school of about 30 doing some amazing leaps. We encountered another school of about 80 the next day, and two much smaller groups on our fourth day out. We also found a few with the Pantropical Spotted Dolphins off Fogo in the Cape Verdes.

- Short-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*: Our first were a pod of six that passed close by the ship as we were approaching Boatswain Bird Island in Ascension, but our best views were of a loose pod of about 30 individuals loafing at the surface about 25 nautical miles south of the equator. The whales seemed little bothered by our presence, and we were able to stay with them for over half an hour. We also saw a small group the next day and a pod of about 12 as we were approaching Fogo in the Cape Verde Islands.
- Long-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala melas* (NL): A pod of about 20 put in a brief appearance on our fourth day out from South Georgia, well north of the Convergence, but were seen by only three of us.
- Melon-headed Whale *Peponocephala electra* (NL): Those of us who chose to go on the pelagic cruise between Fogo and Brava rather than do the island tour were rewarded with good views of a pod of at least five of these small 'blackfish'.
- Risso's Dolphin *Grampus griseus*: Our only sighting was of a school of between four and eight individuals during our third day at sea after leaving Ascension.
- Caribou (Reindeer) (Introduced) *Rangifer tarandus*: Good views of about 50 at Stromness and 100 in Fortuna Bay. Plans are now being made to eradicate these introduced 'exotics' from South Georgia because of the damage they are doing to the native vegetation and consequences this has for many of the nesting sea-birds.

Atlantic Odyssey : 24 March to 4 May 2011



Magellanic Woodpecker, Tierra del Fuego National Park



Immature Chilean Hawk : Tierra del Fuego National Park



Spectacled Ducks : Tierra del Fuego National Park



Rufous-chested Dotterel, near Ushuaia



Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, near Ushuaia



Kelp Geese in Ushuaia harbour

Atlantic Odyssey : 24 March to 4 May 2011



Riding out a storm in the Antarctic Sound



The "Plancius" at anchor in Cooper Bay, South Georgia



King Penguins, Cooper Bay, South Georgia



Gentoo Penguin at Cooper Bay, South Georgia



Pale-faced Sheathbill, Cooper Bay, South Georgia



Subantarctic Skua, Cooper Bay, South Georgia

Atlantic Odyssey : 24 March to 4 May 2011



South Georgia Pipit, Cooper Bay, South Georgia



Zodiac cruising at Gough Island



Old whaling station at Stromness, South Georgia



Spectacled Petrel off Gough Island



Tristan Albatross off Gough Island



Tristan da Cunha

Atlantic Odyssey : 24 March to 4 May 2011



Leaving the landing site on Inaccessible Island



Tristan Bunting (*acunhae*) on Inaccessible Island



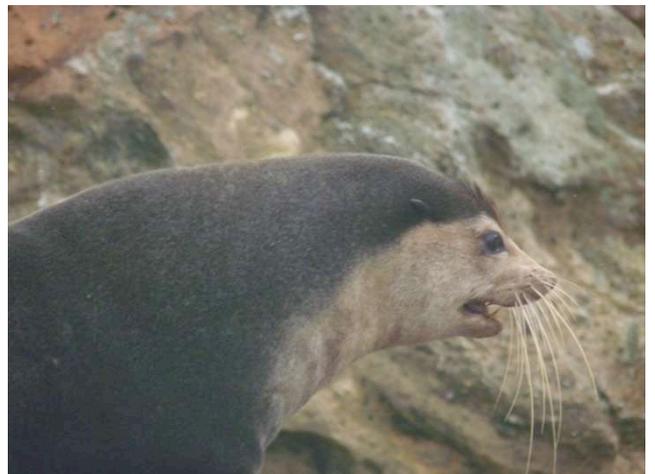
A sneaky adult Inaccessible Island Rail



Tristan Bunting (*questi*) on Nightingale Island



An inquisitive Tristan Thrush on Inaccessible Island



Subantarctic Fur Seal on Nightingale Island

Atlantic Odyssey : 24 March to 4 May 2011



Yellow-nosed Albatross, Tristan da Cunha



Southern Painted Lady *Vanessa brasiliensis*,
Tristan da Cunha



Antarctic Tern, Tristan da Cunha



Jamestown, St. Helena



Franklin's Gull, off Edinburgh, Tristan da Cunha



St Helena Plover or Wirebird, Deadwood Plain,
St. Helena

Atlantic Odyssey : 24 March to 4 May 2011



**Pantropical Spotted Dolphins near Jamestown,
St. Helena**



**White-tailed Tropicbird and Black Noddy
Boatswain Bird Island, Ascension**



Immature Ascension Frigatebird, Ascension Island



Sooty Terns at Wideawake Fairs, Ascension Island



Brown Booby, Boatswain Bird Island, Ascension



Brown Noddies, Ascension Island

Atlantic Odyssey : 24 March to 4 May 2011



Sperm Whale near the Equator



Juvenile Bourne's (Purple) Heron, Cape Verde Islands



Sunset in the Doldrums



Cape Verde (Cane) Warblers, Cape Verde Islands



Red-billed Tropicbird in the wake



One of two Black Herons at Barragem de Poilão, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands