



**BIRDING CRUISE TIERRA DEL FUEGO, THE FALKLANDS, SOUTH  
GEORGIA, AND THE ANTARCTIC PENINSULA  
TRIP REPORT DECEMBER 2017  
By Chris Lotz**



**Light-mantled Albatross**

What an incredible journey of a lifetime! The scenery was unbelievably spectacular. The birds were wonderful and included seven penguin species, **Snow Petrel**, many albatrosses including the most majestic of all, **Wandering Albatross**, along with the sleek, beautiful **Light-mantled Albatross**, and some rare, localized terrestrial birds such as **South Georgia Pipit** and **Cobb's Wren**, and then of course all the sought-after birds of southernmost South America (Tierra del Fuego) such as **Magellanic Woodpecker** and the tricky **White-bellied Seedsnipe**. Other wildlife was equally spectacular and included lots of whales, dolphins, and seals, including my personal favorite, the almost reptilian-looking Leopard Seal.

This incredible expedition cruise, which allows one to walk in the steps of Sir Ernest Shackleton, is not one any serious wildlife enthusiast should miss. Please see <http://birdingecotours.com/tours/tours-by-destination/antarctica> for this and other upcoming Antarctic cruises and also kindly see <http://birdingecotours.com/tours/destination/country/argentina> for our Argentinian trips, which we will run just before our Antarctic trips that begin in Ushuaia, so you can combine them and do a mega-tour if desired.

We started and ended this amazing voyage in the world's southernmost city, Ushuaia, Argentina, where we birded sites such as Tierra del Fuego National Park and the Garibaldi Pass. We then cruised to the Falkland Islands, where we spent a couple of magnificent days, looking for birds and other wildlife and also being sure to walk around historic Stanley Harbour. We then sailed for South Georgia, where we visited many sites such as the absolutely phenomenal Salisbury Plain, home of 60,000 **King Penguins** and probably the most spectacular single wildlife site I have ever had the privilege of experiencing. There was lots more to see in South Georgia, though, and we indeed had a few days there. Finally, it was the Antarctic Peninsula itself – the jagged peaks and endless ice formations (blue icebergs, beautiful sea ice, etc.) being a feast for the eyes. We sailed through sea ice into the Weddell Sea for a little while, and we also cruised along the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula a bit.

#### **Day 1, 28 November 2017. arrival in Ushuaia, the world's southernmost city**

After long overnight flights, trip participants started arriving in Ushuaia, excited about the next three weeks and what they might bring. Before boarding the ship we had almost a full day of land-based birding scheduled, targeting localized species of the tip of South America (and later, at the end of the trip, we also had another 24 hours to try and clean up on any of these specials that had been previously missed).

#### **Day 2, 29 November 2017. Tierra del Fuego National Park, then boarding the ship at 4 p.m.**

After breakfast we drove to the wonderfully picturesque Tierra del Fuego National Park, where we spent a fair amount of the day. On the way there and back we also visited other sites such as *Reserva Natural Urbana Bahía Encerrada* (which is right next to the town of Ushuaia). Birding was brilliant and included many localized species. We were entertained by a lot of water-associated birds such as the bizarre, flightless **Fuegian Steamer Duck**, **Flying Steamer Duck** (not always flying, but they can fly, hence the name!), **Crested Duck**, **Chiloe** (Southern) **Wigeon**, **Yellow-billed Pintail**, **Red Shoveler**, **Upland Goose**, **Kelp Goose**, **Ashy-headed Goose** (all these strange South American geese are really attractive-looking things) and **Great Grebe**. All these species were seen at really close quarters – some of them ridiculously close-by;

many of the species seemed unafraid of humans even though we weren't yet on the isolated southern ocean islands we were going to reach later in the trip, where many birds famously don't seem to fear people. Other water-associated birds we encountered today included loads of **Southern Giant Petrel** (in Ushuaia, one gets really close views of this bird), **Rock Shag**, **Imperial Shag**, **Black-faced Ibis**, **Magellanic Oystercatcher**, **Southern Lapwing** (another ubiquitous Argentine/South American bird), North American migrants **White-rumped** and **Baird's Sandpipers**, **South American** (Magellanic) **Snipe**, **Chilean Skua**, **Kelp Gull**, good-looking **Dolphin Gull**, **South American Tern**, and others.

Raptors also abounded today, the highlight being **Chilean Hawk** (which perched for us and provided first-class views!), **Southern Crested Caracara**, the ubiquitous **Chimango Caracara** (which is all over Argentina) and for sure the usual **Turkey Vultures**.

We also found **Austral Parakeet**, **Chilean Swallow**, **Magellanic Woodpecker** (both males and females giving stupendous views; a couple of them flew noisily over my head), **Dark-bellied Cinclodes** feeding along a beach, **Buff-winged Cinclodes**, **White-throated Treerunner**, **Thorn-tailed Rayadito**, **Chilean** (White-crested) **Elaenia**, **Austral Negrito**, **Tufted Tit-Tyrant**, **House Wren**, **Austral Thrush**, **Correndera Pipit**, spectacularly crimson-fronted **Long-tailed Meadowlark**, **Patagonian Sierra Finch**, **Black-chinned Siskin**, **Rufous-collared Sparrow** (which extends literally from the northern to the southern extremities of South America) and, dare I mention it, **House Sparrow**.



Fuegian Steamer Ducks, Tierra del Fuego National Park





Female Magellanic Woodpecker, Tierra del Fuego National Park



Male Magellanic Woodpecker, Tierra del Fuego National Park





Great Grebe, Tierra del Fuego National Park



Red Shoveler with two Yellow-billed Pintails – Ushuaia

At 4 p.m. we boarded our small ship, the *Plancius*, and started our sea adventure. Birding was exciting as we added species such as **Magellanic Penguin**, **Black-browed Albatross**, **White-chinned Petrel**, and **Arctic Tern** to our growing list while sailing through the famous Beagle Channel toward the open ocean.

### **Day 3, 30 November 2017. Sailing toward the Falkland Islands**

We woke up to find ourselves in the open ocean outside the Beagle Channel. Here we steadily accumulated a good list of pelagic species. These included **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, a lot of **Southern Fulmars**, grand **Southern Royal Albatrosses**, **Great Shearwater**, **Slender-billed Prion**, **Cape Petrel**, and **Sooty Shearwater**. We also found our first exciting mammals, Fin Whale and Hourglass Dolphin.

### **Day 4, 1 December 2017. Falkland Islands**

We started the day finding ourselves in view of the Falkland Islands! We went through an area where good numbers of **Common Diving Petrels** were foraging. There also were quite a lot of the sleek-looking **South American Terns**. South American Sea Lion was around, as was Commerson's Dolphin (right next to the ship, in fact). Our first **Gentoo Penguins** added to the excitement. All this happened rather early in the morning. After breakfast we landed on a beach on Carcass Island, and this proved incredible! The weather was magnificent, a sunny day with really mild temperatures. We were immediately greeted by ridiculously close-up, tame **Blackish Cinclodes** and **Cobb's Wren** foraging on the beach, seemingly oblivious to our presence and apparently blind to humans. **Grass Wren** was also great to see, even though this is a widespread bird (despite the North American Sedge Wren now being split, the distribution of the southern split, Grass Wren, is still extending from here northward to Central America). Stunningly beautiful **Long-tailed Meadowlark** and stacks of **Austral (Falkland) Thrushes** were very much in evidence. We also saw a couple of displaying (hovering) **Dark-faced Ground Tyrants**, and there were beautiful **White-bridled Finches** along with **Black-chinned Siskins** around in fair numbers too. We proceeded on our walk (making the most of the uncharacteristic, lovely weather), getting great views of **Upland Goose**, **Kelp Goose**, **Ruddy-headed Goose**, **Falkland Steamer Duck**, **Crested Duck**, **Yellow-billed Teal**, **Magellanic Oystercatcher**, **Blackish Oystercatcher**, and **Black-crowned Night Heron**. We encountered a pair of **Striated Caracaras** feeding a chick in a nest and also saw stacks of these at the end of the walk.

At the end of our lovely birding walk we were treated to a vast selection of cakes, scones, and biscuits with tea (which spoiled our lunch back on the ship, which was in an hour's time; by the way, meals on the ship were always superb).



White-bridled Finch, Carcass Island, Argentina

We then re-boarded the ship, where we enjoyed a delicious lunch before proceeding to Saunders Island for the afternoon. What a place! We visited breeding colonies of several target species, such as our first **King Penguins** (a very small colony compared to the unbelievable colony of 60,000 of them at Salisbury Plain, South Georgia, that we were going to experience further into the trip), **Gentoo Penguin**, **Magellanic Penguin**, **Southern Rockhopper Penguin**, and **Black-browed Albatross**. This afternoon we were also entertained by about 30 white, pigeon-like **Snowy Sheathbills** bathing in some fresh water, **Brown Skua**, **Dolphin Gull**, and other interesting birds.





Southern Rockhopper Penguin



A quizzical-looking Gentoo Penguin on the beach at Saunders Island





King Penguin – there's a small colony of them on Saunders Island

Mammal-wise this was also an excellent day. We saw our first Southern Elephant Seals (but we had to wait until later in the trip before finding the giant males of this species). It's comical watching these smaller, young Southern Elephant Seals moving on land, as their flippers are useless when not in the water and they have to slide and wiggle along like reptiles. We also saw South American Fur Seals. Peale's Dolphin was a real mammalian highlight seen from the ship later.



Southern Elephant Seal “wieners” are much less aggressive than fur seals...



A friendly pair of Antarctic Fur Seals from later in the trip (South Georgia)



**Day 5, 2 December 2017. Stanley, the capital of the Falklands**

After sailing past some other parts of the Falklands we eventually arrived at Stanley Harbour just after breakfast, and here we spent most of the morning. We enjoyed this quaint, historic town of about 2000 people but enjoyed the birding in the nearby tundra areas even more. Highlights were **Rufous-chested Plover**, loads of **Two-banded Plovers**, **South American (Falkland) Snipe** (the best views of a snipe I've ever had; two of them sat right near our feet), **Southern Crested Caracara**, and **White-tufted Grebe**. We had further views of many other really good special birds such as **Ruddy-headed Goose**, **White-bridled Finch**, beautiful **Long-tailed Meadowlark**, and various others.



Rufous-chested Plover, near Stanley, Falkland Islands



South American (or Magellanic or even Falkland, depending on what splits one agrees with)  
Snipe, near Stanley, Falkland Islands



Two-banded Plover near Stanley, Falkland Islands



**Day 6, 3 December 2017. Sailing southward into cooler waters**

Today was a very exciting day pelagic-bird-wise! Before breakfast we had already added **Wandering Albatross** (along with lots more **Southern Royal Albatrosses**), **Light-mantled Albatross**, and **Grey-headed Albatross** (an immature one that flew around the ship a couple of times, giving good views) to our growing list of albatrosses. Also before breakfast **Black-bellied Storm Petrel** put in a first appearance and, along with **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, showed really well, displaying the white below with the dark belly line. Today **Antarctic Prions** started replacing **Slender-billed Prions**, which had been a feature of previous days of the cruise. We also saw loads of species we'd previously encountered, such as **Sooty Shearwater**, **White-chinned Petrel**, **Black-browed Albatross**, **Southern Giant Petrel**, and all the others.

**Day 7, 4 December 2017. Heading toward South Georgia**

In contrast to previous days this was a very quiet day bird-wise, as the seas became calm after a couple of very rough days. The only new trip bird was **Blue Petrel**, of which we saw a few very well.

**Day 8, 5 December 2017. South Georgia – Salisbury Plain and Right Whale Bay**

It snowed lightly most of the day, but nevertheless we managed to see some of the peaks and glaciers of South Georgia as we sailed towards Salisbury Plain, the site of a massive (60,000 strong!) **King Penguin** colony. We arrived at this site around 10:15 a.m. and did a walk to the penguin colony, experiencing highly territorial fur seals (see photos earlier in this report) en route. **South Georgia Pipits**, the world's most southerly-breeding passerine, proved easy to see around the penguin colony.



Snowy Sheathbill enjoying the South Georgia scenery from the ship deck

In the afternoon we did a Zodiac cruise around Right Whale Bay, seeing close-up Southern Elephant Seals, Antarctic Fur Seals (including a couple of blonde – leucistic – ones), **Northern** and **Southern Giant Petrels**, **Gentoo Penguin**, **King Penguin**, **Brown Skua**, **South Georgia Pipit**, **South Georgia Shag**, flyby **Light-mantled Albatross**, and many others.



Love penguins, King Penguins





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A forlorn-looking King Penguin chick

### Day 9, 6 December 2017. A further full day exploring South Georgia

It was a beautiful, sunny morning, and the high snowy peaks showed impressively, as did the glaciers, one coming right down to the sea. Our first stop was at Shackleton's grave and the nearby, excellent, informative museum at the old whaling station of Grytviken, which is set in an awe-inspiring fjord. This was a truly fascinating stop with stacks to look at, such as a rusty old whaling ship and factories, not to mention the wildlife. There were some pretty massive Southern Elephant Seals (along with a great many young elephant seals), lots of aggressive, territorial Antarctic Fur Seals, a couple of molting **King Penguins**, and others. **Antarctic Terns** got very worked up and mobbed each skua that flew past. **Yellow-billed Pintails** were also much in evidence.

We then re-boarded our ship and continued to make our way around the island, getting back into the open ocean for a little while, enjoying not only the spectacular scenery but also the pelagic birds. A couple of us managed to see two **Macaroni Penguins** swimming in the water, but these were greatly outnumbered by **Gentoo Penguins**. We enjoyed further views of many of the pelagic species we'd already encountered previously, such as **Grey-headed Albatross**, **Light-mantled Albatross**, and **Black-browed Albatross** (interestingly, no Wandering Albatrosses today). While picking through hundreds of **Antarctic Prions** trying to find **Fairy Prion**, we did see a further **Blue Petrel**. No storm petrels were seen today, but there were large numbers of **White-chinned Petrels**. We continued seeing both species of giant petrel, including our second pure white **Southern Giant Petrel**.

We eventually reached Godthul, where some folks did a 5 km walk (braving the aggressive fur seals hiding in the tussock grass), eventually to be rewarded with fantastic views of the scenery.

During this walk a stop was made at a colony of **Gentoo Penguins** very high up on a grassy slope. Others joined a Zodiac cruise around the beautiful bay.

#### **Day 10, 7 December 2017. Stromness and Fortuna Bay (famous sites for Shackleton)**

In the morning (after enjoying great views of a **Snow Petrel** flying next to the ship) we went to Stromness and walked to a waterfall that Shackleton is said to have slid down in winter (?), and in the afternoon we visited another **King Penguin** colony at Fortuna Bay. The most exciting part of the journey, however, was sailing between sites, as the pelagic birding was truly excellent (which is often the case in rough weather...).



The roughish seas were conducive to pelagic birding

We were particularly pleased to find our first two **Fairy Prions** (please do ask if you want any photos; many of the photos I took are perfectly good for identification purposes but are not sharp enough for this report), along with hundreds of **Antarctic Prions**, **Wilson's Storm Petrels**, good numbers of **Grey-headed Albatrosses**, one **Wandering Albatross**, and all the other usual pelagics we had previously seen. **Antarctic Terns** and **South Georgia Shags** were a daily occurrence here around South Georgia. We also enjoyed a good number of sightings of **King Penguins** and **Gentoo Penguins** swimming.

#### **Day 11, 8 December 2017. South Georgia continued**

This was a highly productive and exciting day, even though sea and weather conditions did not allow us to land at any sites on our last South Georgia day. Sailing past Cooper Bay, we encountered four **Penguin** species: **Macaroni**, **Chinstrap**, **King**, and **Gentoo**. We were very close to large colonies of the first two, and both were new trip birds for most people on the



cruise. There were also hundreds of **Snow Petrels** today; this was the first day in which we saw more than just one or two individuals of this beautiful bird of the far south. We also saw several glaciers coming down into the sea and our first floating ice.

We then visited the stunningly beautiful Drygalski Fjord, where some participants did a Zodiac cruise, seeing **Chinstrap Penguin** on a small piece of ice and also encountering Weddell Seals (our first ones).

We then backtracked to Cooper Bay again, hoping that calming sea conditions might allow a Zodiac cruise or even a shore landing. While neither were possible, the weather had cleared up a little, so the views of birds we'd seen previously were now better.

Great excitement was yet to come, after we'd left South Georgia for our long southward journey to the Antarctic Peninsula. We found what must have been our largest concentration of pelagics, accompanying some Orcas (which showed well several times). There were stacks of **Storm Petrels** – mainly **Wilson's**, but also accompanied by good numbers of **Black-bellied** and (excitingly!) just one or two **Grey-backed**, a new trip bird! We also found our biggest numbers yet of **Antarctic Prions**, along with large numbers of **Black-browed Albatrosses** and smaller numbers of **White-chinned Petrels** and **Cape Petrels**.



Orcas

As we traveled southward we came into a zone where **Diving Petrels** were abundant – seemingly mainly **Common** but with some probable (90% plus) **South Georgia** thrown in (we have photos of these and most other species mentioned in this report available for anyone who wants to see – please e-mail [info@birdingecotours.com](mailto:info@birdingecotours.com) to ask for photos). We did also have a **South Georgia Diving Petrel** on the deck early this morning – seabirds often do find their way onto ships; usually attracted to lights.



The **South Georgia Diving Petrel** that was found on deck

After yet another excellent dinner, just before sunset, we enjoyed large numbers of big white-backed **Albatrosses**, mainly **Wandering** but also at least two **Southern Royal** and a **Northern Royal**. At least one **Light-mantled Albatross** was also hanging around. As on most days, we also saw good numbers of **Grey-headed Albatrosses** today.

**Day 12, 9 December 2017. Sailing southward toward our next stop, Elephant Island**

In general, birding was on the quiet side this morning until we encountered our first iceberg! This beautiful massive chunk of ice was surrounded by seabirds (which is typical, as there is lots of food caused by the fresh iceberg meltwater from far beneath the surface – as most of the iceberg is submerged – rising to the surface, bringing nutrients to the surface). All the species were ones we had already seen a lot of on previous days, but they also included some less frequent species such as **Southern Fulmar** and **Black-bellied Storm Petrel**.





Our first iceberg – we circled it, allowing fantastic views from every angle, and allowing us to see what birds were around it.



Dwarfed by our first iceberg, pelagic seabirds swarmed around its base.

The afternoon started quietly, but we enjoyed a prolonged viewing session of two Fin Whales. During quiet afternoons there were always fascinating talks to listen to, and we also enjoyed watching the exciting Shackleton movie.

### **Day 13, 10 December 2017. Continuing southward**

Today was another relatively quiet day. But it was interesting to notice the change in some of the species. For example, for the first time during the trip we found that **Northern** (not Southern) **Giant Petrel** was the predominant one. And we saw no Wilson's Storm Petrels today; but there were reasonable numbers of **Black-bellied Storm Petrels**. **Southern Fulmar** became very common today. Otherwise, we got many repeats of previous days' birds.

We did end the day with six Orcas that showed very well.

### **Day 14, 11 December 2017. Elephant Island**

We found ourselves at the beautiful Elephant Island, part of the South Shetland Islands group, just north of the Antarctic Peninsula. We managed to get a view of Point Wild, where Shackleton landed on this island after he got stuck in the ice and his boat sank. We then continued to Cape Lookout, a spectacular place. Here we did a Zodiac cruise in the early afternoon. It turned out to be spectacular, not only with scenery, but also because a Leopard Seal hung around the boat for a while, and we also saw **Chinstrap Penguins** and **Macaroni Penguins** on the rocks. The Leopard Seal seemed very inquisitive and followed us wherever we went, even coming back to the ship with us (but luckily not boarding). **Antarctic Shags** were new for the trip. There were also various other interesting birds, such as thousands of **Cape Petrels** (many of them settled on the water), **Snowy Sheathbills**, etc., etc.



The friendly Leopard Seal that hung around our Zodiacs





Enjoying the Chinstrap and Macaroni Penguin colonies

### Day 15, 12 December 2017. The Antarctic Peninsula

We woke up this morning with views of, for many of us, our seventh continent! The icebergs and peaks of this part of Antarctica are, to say the least, spectacular!

After breakfast we landed at the impressive Brown Bluff, where we enjoyed a colony of a new **Penguin** species for the trip, **Adelie** (and there were also breeding **Gentoo Penguins** and a lone **Chinstrap Penguin** around). A few **Snow Petrels** were also clearly breeding up on the cliffs, as were hundreds of **Cape Petrels**. We got some amazingly close views of **Wilson's Storm Petrels** as they touched their feet on the water near the Zodiac on the cruise to the penguin colony, and also as they flew past us over land – they too must have been breeding nearby. Skuas searched for **Kelp Gulls** (which were also breeding here) to steal food from. We had to wait until the Zodiac returned to the cruise ship before we got good enough views of a pale-morph **South Polar Skua** to clinch the identification and to get this one onto our list. There were a couple of **Antarctic Terns** around as well. This was a memorable morning, also including a spectacular walk onto a glacier (affording spectacular views of the area as we gained some height).



Zodiac near Brown Bluff (with Snow Petrel)



Brown Bluff, Antarctic Peninsula





Which do you prefer, Chinstrap or Adelie Penguin?



Our ship – the *Plancius* – from Brown Bluff, Antarctic Peninsula



David with a line of Adelie Penguins behind him



A couple of good Adelie Penguins



After lunch we headed into the Weddell Sea, negotiating spectacular sea ice with high mountains forming a backdrop. Wildlife is scarce in this cold desert, but whatever we did see was good! We cruised past a Crabeater Seal and a huge Leopard Seal, both lying on sea ice. **Snow Petrels** flew around, and **Adelie Penguins** stood on the ice.



Entering the Weddell Sea



Crabeater Seal



Leopard Seal on sea ice



In the mid-afternoon we did a Zodiac cruise among the sea ice! At the start of this cruise, we saw a small, young Leopard Seal. We alighted on the ice a couple of times and were treated to a **Snow Petrel** roosting in a hole in the ice! An **Adelie Penguin** also joined us on the ice at one point. Just before we re-boarded the ship we saw a **South Polar Skua**. All in all, a spectacular afternoon! The weather really “played ball” today.



Snow Petrel roosting in the ice



Weddell Sea scenery



The *Plancius* in Antarctica



Antarctic scenery



Antarctic iceberg



**Day 16, 13 December 2017. Sailing to the northwestern part of the Antarctic Peninsula**

Today it was sunny and the seas were completely calm, allowing us to enjoy the breathtaking scenery as well as good views of our first Antarctic Minke Whales and many views of Humpback Whales. A lucky few of us saw one of the latter breaching! Passing through the very narrow "Kodak Gap", we enjoyed unforgettably spectacular scenic views.



Antarctic scenery



Antarctic scenery



Antarctic scenery

We also enjoyed good views of several birds we'd seen before, such as three penguin species. In the afternoon we did a Zodiac cruise in magnificent Charlotte Bay, managing to obtain good views of Weddell Seal and more Humpback Whales, along with an **Antarctic Tern**.



Weddell Seal

#### **Day 17, 14 December 2017. Damoy Hut landing and snowshoe walk**

We cruised past magnificent scenery again (as always!), making our way through the Neumayer Channel before breakfast. Jagged peaks of the high Antarctic Mountains arose through the snow in places. After breakfast we did a landing at the Damoy Point, site of the British Antarctic Survey historic Damoy Hut. Here we enjoyed the scattered **Gentoo Penguins** colonies and saw two Weddell Seals, which were scratching their backs on the ice (videos to be posted on the Birding Ecotours YouTube channel). We also got extremely close-up views of a pair of nesting **South Polar Skuas**, one of which would sometimes fly from one penguin colony to the next, watching for any unguarded penguin nests. We snowshoed up a hill, getting magnificent views of the bays, jagged peaks, and glaciers in the area. The Damoy Hut was fascinating to look inside.





Weddell Seals and Damoy Hut (blue) in the distance



A small Gentoo Penguin colony with our ship in the distance

In the afternoon we visited Foyen Harbor, a natural harbor located at Enterprise Island in Wilhelmina Bay. We then started heading north, away from the Antarctic Peninsula.



South Polar Skua – we also saw one pale morph one, which was great.

**Day 18, 15 December 2017. South Shetland Islands and heading northward**

In the morning we landed at Half Moon Island (eastern end) in the South Shetland Islands. Here we enjoyed a wonderful colony of **Chinstrap Penguins**, getting lightly snowed on. There were a good number of other species around, none of them new for the trip, though.

In the afternoon we headed into the Drake Passage. The seas were surprisingly calm, and birding was slow (as is often the case with pelagic birds when the seas aren't rough enough to be conducive for feeding).

**Day 19, 16 December 2017. Heading northward across the Antarctic Convergence**

While we were sailing through the Drake passage and across the Atlantic Convergence, calm conditions continued. Birds did start picking up, though. We saw more **Blue Petrels** today than on any previous day of the trip and had good views of a few **Black-bellied Storm Petrels** and one or two **Wilson's Storm Petrels**. We started seeing albatrosses again, mainly **Black-browed Albatross**, but we also saw a couple of **Light-mantled Albatrosses** and a gorgeous immature **Wandering Albatross**, which followed the ship for a couple of hours.



Immature Wandering Albatross that followed the ship for a couple of hours today

**Day 20, 17 December 2017. Continuing northward to the edge of the Beagle Channel**

We enjoyed fantastic scenery as we entered the Beagle Channel and started sailing between Chile and Argentina, arriving in Ushuaia harbor a bit early – this evening instead of the next morning. Our early arrival was a true bonus, as we managed to see the Beagle Channel while it was still light! Sei Whales showed well, as did Peale's Dolphins. There were stacks of **Sooty Shearwaters** as we entered the channel. We also caught up with old friends we hadn't seen in a while, including **Magellanic Penguins** and **South American Terns**.

**Day 21, 18 December 2017. Beagle Channel**

We enjoyed a super day, which started just outside the Beagle Channel, and we then spent the entire day sailing through the Beagle Channel, this time in daylight! The scenery of this part of the world is truly spectacular. We saw a lot of good birds, but nothing new except for **Olrog's Gull**. We arrived back in beautiful Ushuaia a bit early (around 8 p.m.).

**Day 22, 19 December 2017. High altitude birding near Ushuaia**

We had a relaxing morning after disembarking the ship at 8:30 a.m. In the afternoon we birded the Garibaldi Pass northwest of Ushuaia. This is an amazingly beautiful place, and our main target was **White-bellied Seedsnipe**, which we located after much searching above the tree line. We were also very pleased to see other great birds, such as **Andean Condor**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **Ochre-naped Ground Tyrant**, **Dark-faced Ground Tyrant**, **Yellow-bridled Finch**, **Gray-flanked Cinclodes**, and a young **Chilean Hawk**!



We then visited the famed rubbish dump in Ushuaia, which (as expected) generated **White-throated Caracara** along with the more widespread **Southern Crested Caracara** and **Chimango Caracara**, **Turkey Vulture**, **Chilean Skua**, large numbers of two gull species, etc. All in all an incredible, completely unforgettable trip of a lifetime!



Locating White-bellied Seedsnipe is like looking for a needle in a haystack. But we eventually found one. What a beaut!



White-bellied Seedsnipe habitat – one has to search everything above the tree line, i.e. everything in this photo!