



# WildWings

## The Atlantic Odyssey 2018

### Voyage Report by WildWings Leader Phil Hansbro

Aboard M/V Plancius

#### 26-27<sup>th</sup> March – Ushuaia

Various members of the team gathered in Ushuaia from all around the globe. Some participants had been several times before, for others it was their first time. So there were various exciting options for people to do. Some went to the Garibaldi Pass and scored **White-bellied Seedsnipe**. Others went on a boat trip to the Beagle Channel Islands and saw **Blackish Cinclodes** (but no sign of Magellanic Diving-Petrels). Most of us went to the Tierra del Fuego National Park, where there were stunning views of **Magellanic Woodpecker** and **Austral Pygmy-Owl**, a very nice unexpected bonus of a party of **Patagonian Tyrants**, as well as **Magellanic Penguin**, **Southern Black-browed Albatross**, **Southern Giant-Petrel**, **Andean Condor**, **Black-chested Buzzard Eagle**, **Peregrine**, **American Kestrel**, **Dark-bellied Cinclodes**, **Spectacled and Crested Ducks**, **Yellow-billed Pintail**, **Tufted Tit-Tyrant** and **Patagonian Sierra-Finch**. Any time people would visit the shoreline outside our hotel or along the foreshore, to find **Rufous-chested Dotterel**, **Kelp and Upland Geese**, **Magellanic and Blackish Oystercatchers**, **Dolphin, Kelp and Brown-hooded Gulls**, **Flightless and Flying Steamer-Ducks**, **Chiloe Wigeon**, **King, Imperial and Rock Cormorants** plus **South American Terns**. The night of the 27<sup>th</sup> was a visit back to the National Park where people were rewarded with **Rufous-legged Owl**.

#### 28<sup>th</sup> March – Embark and sail from Ushuaia

Today was mainly about preparing for the voyage, delivering our luggage to the ship, and then finally after a seemingly endless wait, boarding the vessel and setting sail. After checking in our luggage some went on another mini-tour, others did part of it. At the rubbish dump were large numbers of **Kelp and Dolphin Gulls**, **Southern and Chimango Caracaras** and good numbers of **White throated Caracaras** including one being chased by a **Black-chested Buzzard Eagle**, and the first **Chilean Skuas**. Around the foreshore were the same gulls, terns and cormorants, **Black-browed Albatross**, **Southern Giant-Petrel**, **Red-chested Dotterel**, **Baird's and White-rumped Sandpiper**, **Dark-bellied Cinclodes**. Driving around the town we finally scored perched **Austral Parakeets**, small patches of woodland produced **Chilean Elaenia** and **Swallow**, and more **Sierra-Finches**. Finally we boarded Plancius and after the essential introductions and safety drills we set sail east down the Beagle Channel. A beautiful evening, with the full moon reflecting off the calm sea ahead of us. A very nice selection of the regular birds were encountered in singles or in a particularly large feeding flock

with 20 **Magellanic Penguin**, 200 **Southern Black-browed Albatross**, 100 **Southern Giant-Petrel**, great first views of 10 stunning **Southern Fulmars**, 30 **Sooty Shearwaters**, **King, Imperial and Rock Cormorants**, 50 **Chilean Skua, Kelp, Dolphin, Brown-hooded Gulls, South American Terns**. Also noted were 10 **South American Sealions** and a **Sei Whale** was seen briefly. Waterfowl included **Upland and Kelp Geese, Flying Steamer Duck, Crested Duck**, whilst raptors seen were **Turkey Vulture and Crested and Chimango Caracara**. After dark, we enjoyed our first onboard dinner and then we all settled in, very excited for the rest of our great ocean adventure ahead.

### 29<sup>th</sup> March – At sea to South Georgia

A really excellent and enthralling first day at sea today. Great conditions, calm seas and lots of sun. The day started with **Wandering Albatrosses** and a few **Antarctic Prions**, sea depth went from 1,000M to 3,000M then back into a slope and then up to 100M, where we found a big increase in **Southern Royal Albatrosses**, and **Slender-billed Prions**. Two **Magellanic Diving-Petrel** early on. The surprise of the day were 3 **Cattle Egrets** flying around the ship. Large numbers of **Black-browed (~1,000)** and some **Grey-headed Albatross, Southern (500) and Northern (50) Giant Petrels**, a couple of **Southern Fulmar** and some **Cape Petrels**, accompanied the ship all day. Lots of **White-chinned Petrels** and small numbers of **Soft-plumaged Petrels** plus **Great and Sooty Shearwaters** and **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were around all day. Amazing around 20 **Grey-backed Storm-Petrel** and an unidentified wader were seen on floating kelp and two **Common Diving-Petrels** were also noted. Cetaceans were **Fin Whales** and **Hourglass Dolphins**.

### 30<sup>th</sup> March – At sea to South Georgia

Another top day at sea. It started well as soon as it became light enough to see. Almost immediately was the trip's first **Grey Petrel** and a likely female **Tristan Albatross**. Several more **Grey Petrels** were seen throughout the day. We were still fortunate to have **Southern Royal Albatross** and **Southern Wandering Albatross** that gave nice comparisons, as well as **Soft-plumage Petrels** and the ever present **Southern Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatross**, both species of **Giant Petrels** and **White-chinned Petrels** that stayed with us all day too. There were also soon cries of **Kerguelen Petrel** and we were blessed with the company of these magnificent and unique birds (**Grey and Kerguelen Petrels**), some getting unusually close to the ship. The weather and swell was fine for the morning – so much so that we changed course to go further North to give us a chance of seeing Shag Rock early in the morning in two days time. During the afternoon we had more fleeting **Atlantic Petrels** and our first **King Penguin's** porpoising. There was a smattering of **Cape Petrels, Antarctic and Slender-billed Prions, Great and Sooty Shearwaters** and **Wilson's Storm-Petrels**. We retrospectively identified a **South Georgian Diving-Petrel** from the previous day's photos. There was a **Common Diving-Petrel** and a couple of other **Diving-Petrel** ssp's seen today also. The afternoon slowed down and we were restricted from going on deck but we still managed to see the **King Penguins**, as well as several groups of **Hourglass Dolphin**, a **Whale** blow and one of our very lucky group members got **Spectacled Porpoise**, and some saw **Subantarctic Fur Seal**. Lots of excitement heading for the Antarctic convergence sometime tomorrow morning, with hopefully more of the same and also new birds.

### 31<sup>st</sup> March – At sea towards South Georgia

An enthralling and diverse day today with no less than 26 seabird species! It started just after first light with four skuas, three **Subantarctic Skuas** one chasing a **Southern Wandering Albatross** another a noticeably smaller **South Polar Skua**. Other birds around at the time were other **Southern Wandering Albatross, White-chinned Petrel** and "Softies". We were soon into prions that became the topic of much discussion with many around with the majority deemed **Antarctic and Slender-billed Prions** but also **Fairy** and a possible **Fulmar Prion** (with photos). Other prominent species through the day continued to be **Southern Black-browed Albatross, Southern** and a few **Northern Giant** as well as **White-chinned and Grey Petrels**. Three **Blue Petrel's** and a **Sub-antarctic Little Shearwater** were new for the trip. The only stormy was the ever-present **Black-bellied Storm-Petrel**. Throughout the day there was scatterings of small numbers (one to six) of other birds that kept everyone interested including **King Penguin, Southern Royal and Grey-headed Albatross, Cape, Kerguelen and Atlantic Petrels, Great and Sooty Shearwaters**. The most discussion was about **Diving-Petrels** with most seemingly showing characteristics of **South Georgian**, although those breeding on

South Georgia apparently number 60:40 Common to South Georgian., We eagerly awaited more sightings and interesting discussions the next day on our way to Shag Rocks and South Georgia itself.

### 1<sup>st</sup> April – At sea, Shag Rocks and onto South Georgia

Continuing our excellent trip with 26 species of seabird again today..... It started early with views of Shag Rock where 10,000 pairs of **South Georgian Shags** breed. These were circling and even landing on the ship from first light. Then it turned into an at sea penguin show with >50 **King, Gentoo and Macaroni Penguins** being seen throughout the day. Another major highlight was the first **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** (undoubtedly the best bird in the world) closely circling the ship. There were also the ever present **Wandering** and **Southern Black-browed** and small numbers of **Grey-headed Albatross**, as well as **Southern and Northern Giant, White-chinned** and small numbers of **Soft-plumaged and Cape Petrels** with at least 50 stunning **Blue Petrels**. Other notable species were **Great and Sooty Shearwaters**, good numbers of **Wilson's and Black-bellied Storm-Petrels** and a couple of **Diving-Petrels**, a **Subantarctic Skua** and two **Antarctic Terns**. Two **Kerguelen Petrels** also gave a great show repeatedly visiting the ship in the afternoon. There were many prions to keep us entertained with many ID discussions. The predominant species was Scotia Sea **Fairy Prions** but there were also good numbers of **Antarctic and Slender-billed Prions**. A good cetacean day too with good views of three each of both **Southern Right Whales** and **Southern Bottle-nosed Whales**.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> April – South Georgia

What an awesome visit to South Georgia today..... we had already arrived by first light at Salisbury Plain. A quick visit to the back of the ship found us watching five **South Georgian Pipit** and three **S.G.Pintail** flying around! This is the second largest **King Penguin** colony in South Georgia, with 60,000 pairs. Lots of these birds as well as **Antarctic Fur Seals** were swimming around the ship as soon as we looked out. An expectant breakfast and then we headed off ashore in the Zodiacs. As soon as we landed were in the middle of these remarkable **penguins and fur seals**. A truly awesome sensual experience, the birds are spectacular, the sound they make incredible and the smell was pungent to say the least. They were accompanied by 50+ **Snowy Sheathbills** that we watched feeding on penguin poo, as they love to do. One of our party forgot to look and will take a long time to live that down!! No need to worry there were plenty the next day. We slowly walked along the beach to the main colony. Around the ship and on the beach were lots of **Northern Giant Petrels** and **Subantarctic Skuas**. We walked to a view point over-looking the colony and several **pipits** were flying around. In the afternoon we had another stunning visit this time to Prion Island. On the way we had good looks at **Kelp Gulls, Subantarctic Skuas and Antarctic Terns** and saw more **pintails and pipits**. We landed on the beach amongst **Antarctic Fur Seals, Southern Elephant Seals and Gentoo Penguins**. There we many young and exceptionally cute **fur seals** on the beach and in the tussock grass including several suckling from their mums. We walked up the board walk to the top seeing several **Wandering Albatross** nests, two with very small downy chicks. Several **Northern and Southern Giant Petrels** were also present and flocks totaling 72 **Pintail** flew over. On the walk back down a confiding **pipit** gave great photographic opportunities. More time with the **fur seals** and then a slow Zodiac trip back to the ship stopping off for close views of **Antarctic Terns, pipits and pintails** on the rocks, a **South Georgian Shag** breeding colony as well three **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** perched on the cliffs above.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> April – South Georgia

A beautiful day on South Georgia, we awoke at St Andrew's bay in calm, almost windless conditions and what turned out to be a sunny morning. The snow-covered mountains were in full view and pink with the reflection of the morning sun. Plenty of **King Penguins** and **Southern and Northern Giant Petrels** from the ship including a "**White Nelly**". After breakfast we set off, this time accompanied by Wonder Woman, and were soon on the beach with adult male and female and juvenile **Southern Elephant Seals** plus of course, **Antarctic Fur Seals**. A walk along the beach and wade across a stream got us to the main colony of 150,000 pairs of **King Penguins**, with associated **Snowy Sheathbills Antarctic Skuas and Kelp Gulls**. There were plenty of **South Georgian Shags** and the odd **pipit** and **pintail** flying around also. We spent the morning at this amazing colony before returning seeing a sole **Gentoo Penguin** on the beach. Some took Zodiac cruises and found a **Macaroni Penguin** and we were also able to scope one from the ship. Then during lunch it was off to the old whaling station at Grytviken. We had a traditional ceremony with whisky at Sir Ernest Shackleton's

grave and then visited the somber whaling station as well as the church post-office and gift shop. There was a blonde **Antarctic Fur Seal** with the many more usual grey ones, a smattering of **Southern Elephant Seals, pipits and Antarctic Terns**. It was very interesting to note the reappearance of pipits after a long absence at both these sites following the eradication of mice. We were treated to a barbeque on the back deck by the crew.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> April – South Georgia

Our last day in South Georgia was equally exciting as the other days. The wind had increased substantially which caused us to switch our plans. So we started after an early breakfast with a cruise down Drygalski Fjord. Lots of penguins were swimming and porpoising past including **King**, our first **Chinstraps**, as well as **Macaroni and Gentoo Penguins**. The Fjord was notable for large numbers of **Southern Black Browed Albatross, White-chinned** and >1,1,00 **Cape Petrels, Common** and some **South Georgian Diving-Petrels**. At the end of the Fjord, at the nutrient-rich base of the melting glaciers good numbers of **Antarctic Prion, >1,000 Wilson's Storm-Petrels** looking quite different from their Fuegian cousins, **Antarctic Tern, both Giant Petrels, Snowy Sheathbills and South Georgian Shags**. There were also three **Weddell** and many **Antarctic Fur Seals** hauled out. No sign of any Snow Petrels unfortunately. Then we sailed around the coast hoping for the wind to drop during lunch which it did nicely. This enabled us to Zodiac around the southern coast and islands and we had large numbers of penguins, visiting a **Macaroni** and a spectacular and most northerly **Chinstrap Penguin** colony. A pair of **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** courted as they flew together above the cliffs. Large numbers of **Elephant and Fur Seals** and we were lucky to see a **Leopard Seal** amongst the kelp. Both the **pipit and pintail** were numerous and we again had good views. Other smaller numbers of birds through the day were **Soft-plumaged Petrel, Blue Petrel, Fairy Prion and Black-bellied Storm-Petrel**. We set sail to inspect a large iceberg and leave South Georgia and on q, two **Southern Right Whales** turned up giving excellent and very close views.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> April – At sea, towards Gough Island & Tristan da Cunha

Our first of five, all day pelagics today and many people spent most of the day on the back deck, watching from the stern. Lots of good photo opportunities and some new birds. It started early with the start of good numbers of our first **Sooty Albatross** with nice comparisons with **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross**. Late morning was a **White-headed Petrel** and then two **Great-winged Petrels** were seen later in the day. Throughout were constant sightings of **Wandering Albatross, Southern Black-browed Albatross, Northern and Southern Giant Petrel** including another “**White Nelly**”, **White-chinned Petrel**, small numbers of **Soft-plumaged Petrels, Black-bellied Storm-Petrels, Antarctic Prions and Diving-Petrels**, including one **South Georgian**. Two **Grey-headed Albatross** were also logged.

#### 6<sup>th</sup> April – At sea towards Gough Island & Tristan da Cunha

A slow start with close mist and increased winds that caused the closure of the outside decks. A few **Soft-plumaged Petrels** were still with us as were **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** and a few **prions** that were encountered throughout the day. However, it soon turned into a great and interesting one. Late morning was highlighted by the arrival of “white-bellied” **Black-bellied Storm-Petrels** as well as **Great-winged Petrels** which stayed with us throughout the afternoon too. Another highlight was the combination of 20 **Sooty Albatross** including multiple juveniles, along with 5 **Light-mantled Sooties**, as well as four **Atlantic Petrels**. The prions were very interesting, there were three **Broad-bills** and many **Magillivray's Prions**, along with good numbers of **Antarctic Prions** and a few **Fairy Prions**. After lunch the decks were opened and the numbers of birds increased further. Throughout the day we had two **Wandering** and six **Southern Black-browed, two Grey-headed Albatross, two Northern Giant Petrels** including a juvenile, two **Kerguelen**, and another **White-headed Petrel**. So, very interesting with a wide variety and greatly looking forward to tomorrow.

#### 7<sup>th</sup> April – At sea, heading to Gough Island & Tristan da Cunha

Another quality and interesting all day pelagic. Started briskly with lots of birds around the ship, **Spectacled** and **Soft-plumaged Petrels**, that stayed with us all day. **Spectacled Petrels** are truly a spectacular and rare bird with only 3,000 pairs globally. The **albatrosses** were again their own spectacle with several **Sooties** circling the

vessel providing outstanding photo opps for all on board. Still a couple of **Light-mantled** and **Southern Black-browed** all day. Surprises were **Western Cattle Egrets** – four in total flying in and hanging around the boat all day. Nevertheless, the highlight of the morning and throughout the day were several **Tristan Albatrosses** including adult males and a female. More interesting prions and storm-petrels throughout the day with a mix of **Magillivray's and Antarctic** with a few **Fairy Prions** and white- and black-bellied **Black-bellied Storm-Petrels** plus one true **White-bellied Storm-Petrel** reported. There was an awesome petrel show with single juvenile **Northern Giant Petrel**, **White-chinned**, **15 Spectacled**, **eight Grey**, **three Kerguelen**, **10 Great-winged**, **11 Atlantic** and **35 Soft-plumaged Petrels**. Good numbers also of **Great**, **Sooty** and **Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwater**, four **Wilson's** and a **Grey-backed Storm-Petrel**. There were also 10 **Brown Skua** one looking like a **Falkland**, the rest **Sub-Antarctic** types and two **Long-tailed Skuas**.

### 8<sup>th</sup> April – At sea towards Gough Island & Tristan da Cunha

Another thrilling morning and excellent comparison day starting with good numbers of **Soft-plumaged Petrels**, small but growing numbers of **Tristan** as well as **Southern Black-browed Albatross**. Most notably though was the change in **prions**, with a switch to **Broad-billed Prions** but with smaller numbers of **MaGillivray's** and **Antarctic Prions** which gave very interesting comparisons. We were again graced by **Spectacled Petrels** and there were nice comparisons with **Grey** and **White-chinned Petrels**. A total of seven **albatross** species were seen through the day made up of two **Wandering**, **20 Tristan**, **20 Southern Black-browed**, a **Grey-headed**, six **Sooty** and a **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross**. In addition was a major unexpected highlight for many and probably the rarest observation of the entire trip, was a juvenile **White-capped Albatross**, almost certain of the race *steadii*. **Shearwater** and **storm-petrel** comparisons were **Great**, **Sooty** and **Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwaters** and **Wilson's**, **Grey-backed** and **Black-bellied Storm-Petrels**. Other species seen through the day were two **Northern Giant Petrels**, **Diving-Petrels**, **Arctic Skua**, **Arctic Tern** and a **Cattle Egret**.

### 9<sup>th</sup> April – At sea, arrival at Gough Island

A truly awesome spectacle today, that built up to a crescendo! Started early with **Tristan Albatross** and the now regular **Sooty** and **Southern Black-browed Albatross**, **Soft-plumaged (>6,000)**, **Atlantic (>2,000)** and **Spectacled (50)** **Petrels**, **Great (>1,000)**, **Sooty (20)** and **Sub-Antarctic Little (200)** **Shearwaters**, as well as large numbers of **Broad-billed Prions (>2 million)**. Throughout the day we good numbers of **Little Shearwaters** and new birds were the stunning **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, **White-bellied Storm-Petrel**, **Tristan Skuas**, we saw several of each through the day. Other birds seen were **Southern and Northern Giant**, **Grey (100)**, **Kerguelen**, **Great-winged**, **White-headed Petrels**, **white-bellied Black-bellied Storm-Petrel & Common Diving-Petrel**. The wind was strong and also built up all day. It died down just before Gough but was taken over by Fohn wind reaching 112Km/h. The closer we got to Gough the more birds arrived however. By the end of the day we estimated we had seen >3 million seabirds – it was a truly stunning spectacle!! Everywhere we looked we saw **prions** and **petrels**, each binocular view containing >100 birds. A sight that must be seen to be believed and truly a life experience in itself. We eventually arrived at Gough and were able to see distant colonies of **Northern Rockhopper Penguins**, >20 *tristanesis* race of **Antarctic Tern**, and several **Subantarctic Fur Seals**. Today was truly a life experience and we look forward to more tomorrow, however, there was a howling wind and so prospects looked a bit grim.

### 10<sup>th</sup> April – Gough Island

Most people we up before first light to look for close penguins, other birds and to check out the situation before an early breakfast. Gough Island was a fantastic sight in the mist and intermittent rain. The wind was still blowing 60 Km/h with stronger gusts, we were scanning the colonies with telescopes to get just identifiable views of **Northern Rockhopper Penguins** in the large colonies viewable on the island. A mixed variety of birds were flying around the ship including lots of **Broad-billed Prions**, **Tristan**, **Sooty** and a couple of **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, more **Soft-plumaged** and **Atlantic Petrels**. Of particular interest were both white-bellied **Black-bellied** and **White-bellied Storm-Petrels**, the local race of **Antarctic Tern** in spectacular summer plumage, as well as close views of **Tristan Skua**. We had an apprehensive breakfast while we travelled to the south west of the island where we sought whatever shelter we could from the wind. We were able to anchor and had a scouting Zodiac by the crew and the entire ship was thrilled that we were given the go ahead for a Zodiac tour around the coast. Soon several Zodiacs full of people were on their way to the colonies

– after what seemed like a long time hearing finches we were able to locate up to 12 **Gough Island Finches** that are specific to this small island in the South Atlantic. We had fantastic views of the **Northern Rockhoppers** and **Subantarctic Fur Seal** colonies during the cruise. Unfortunately, we could not find Gough Moorhen despite extensive searching and we hope to see the on Tristan da Cunha. We have to say that the staff of the Plancius really did a fantastic job by giving us this Zodiac cruise. We then sailed around the south and up the east coast seeing the weather and research station and waved to the 10 staff ashore. We then left the island escorted away by large numbers of seabirds. We found resting flocks of **Great Shearwaters** and mixed **albatross, petrel** and **storm-petrels**. A lucky few saw **Dusky Dolphin**. The most spectacular though were again the enormous flocks of **Broad-billed Prions**, numbering many thousands. The rest of the day was spent steaming towards Tristan with the same species, with lots of **albatrosses, giant petrels, prions** and increasing numbers of **Great-winged Petrels**, plus skuas.

### 11<sup>th</sup> April – Tristan da Cunha

We awoke sailing towards Tristan da Cunha with an easing wind but a strong swell against us. Good numbers of birds were still following the ship including **Tristan, Southern Black-browed, Atlantic Yellow-nosed and Sooty Albatrosses**, the odd **giant, White-chinned and Grey Petrels**, lots of **Spectacled, Atlantic and Soft-plumaged** and increasing numbers of **Great-winged Petrels**, as well as **Great Shearwaters** and still huge numbers of **Broad-billed Prions**. Also seen were a couple of **Northern Giant** and **Kerguelen Petrels**, **Sub-Antarctic Little Shearwaters** and an **Arctic Tern**. Of note were the unusual **Southern Giant Petrels** that breed on Tristan that retain a more immature plumage and a pale green bill tip and never reach the more typical full adult plumage retains an overall grey plumage with a pale head. Also on the sail in, and at Tristan itself, the **storm-petrels** retained our interest with some **Wilson's** and also lots of white-bellied **Black-bellied** and a couple of **White-bellied Storm-Petrels**. We arrived at Tristan at around 11 and sailed up the east coast to the town of Edinburgh of the sea. Additional excitement was a sighting by a few of introduced **Gough Island Moorhen** and some vagrant **Cattle Egrets**. The swell, although not huge, was coming directly into the harbour and so it was impossible to land. So we anchored in the lee of the island, close to the sighting of the **Moorhen**. After a while we were all able to get telescope views of several from the upper deck. Then after a false start we were able to do a Zodiac cruise off the north coast where we were able to observe lots of nesting **Atlantic Yellow-nosed and Sooty Albatrosses, Great-winged Petrels, Tristan Skuas** and **Antarctic Terns**. A moulting **Northern Rockhopper Penguin** and a few **Subantarctic Fur Seals** were on the beach. We settled down for the night in anticipation. Some saw an adult **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** that was released after in landed on the ship and were entertained by fluorescent squid around the ship in the dark.

### 12<sup>th</sup> April – Tristan da Cunha

Another awesome day today. We awoke to lots of **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, Soft-Plumaged, Great-winged** and the odd Tristan **Southern Giant** and **Spectacled Petrel**, white-bellied **Black-bellied Storm-Petrels, Great Shearwaters** and a few **Antarctic Terns** around the ship. An Immature **albatross** even landed on the ship. The wind and swell had eased and the mountain on Tristan was a fantastic sight in the early morning sunlight, with a trail of cloud at the top going with the wind-direction like a green candle that had just been blown out. We were given the go ahead to go ashore and the authorities came ashore to stamp our passports and grant us entry. We Zodiac'ed in and were soon walking south along the west side of the island to known sites for the **Tristan Thrush**. It was quite a walk of 1.5-2 Kms that blew off the cobwebs. People were spread out along the base of the escarpment and eventually someone spotted a very confiding **Thrush** in a gully that most people saw. There were a couple of others seen and everyone in the group got to see them. There were also more **Gough Moorhens** seen and many heard and there were good views of **Antarctic Tern**. People then visited the town and the shops, the café drinking all of the locally brewed Albatross Ale and some even went to the pub !! A surprise was a full summer-plumaged adult **Franklin's Gull** seen by one group as they headed back to the ship. The light was fantastic as we left and there were good photographic opportunities for **Tristan and Yellow-nosed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel**, white-bellied **Black-bellied Storm-Petrels, Great-winged** and **Soft-plumaged Petrels**. At the briefing after dinner we were introduced to the Tristan guides that had joined us, and were told of the plan to explore Nightingale Island in the morning. We didn't attempt to land on Inaccessible Island due to a lack of time and sea conditions.

### 13<sup>th</sup> April – Nightingale and Inaccessible Islands

We awoke today to an increase in the wind to 22-25 knots. This did not bode well for getting ashore and an exploratory Zodiac soon returned confirming that landings were not possible today. So instead we did slow ship cruises around Nightingale and then Inaccessible Islands. On these sailings we found several moulting **Northern Rockhopper Penguins** on the beaches, a **Tristan** and several **Atlantic Yellow-nosed** and **Sooty Albatrosses**, the local **Southern Giant Petrel**, lots of **Spectacled**, **Great-winged** and **Soft-plumaged Petrels** and **Great Shearwaters** that all nest on these islands. Indeed between the islands were many thousands of the **shearwaters**. A **Wilson's** and several white-bellied **Black-bellied Storm-Petrel** were also noted. We were able to scope a couple of **Tristan Thrush** and **finches** flying around Nightingale Island. We had close views of a **shark** possibly a **Hammerhead** between the islands. We then sailed back to Tristan to drop off our guides and set course for St Helena. We saw more of the same birds as per the last few days, however, would we see them as we headed to warmer climes for much longer? We did get a run of many **White-bellied Storm-Petrels** and a **Broad-billed Prion**. However, the major highlights of the afternoon were the cetaceans. A group of 30+ **Short-beaked Common Dolphins** came close and were bow-riding giving excellent photographic opportunities. Then as the sun was setting, a **Blue Whale** was sighted. The ship was spun around to the area and we had excellent, extended and close views around the front of the vessel for 20 minutes or so until it got dark. There were a real buzz from everyone on board as we headed north for the following day.

### 14<sup>th</sup> April – At sea towards St Helena

A nice day today, mild winds from the NW. Bird numbers really thinning out now as we head towards a different bioregion, and more tropical species. We started our long search for vagrant Trindade Petrels as we headed north towards St Helena. A few birds were around in the morning giving good views including **Sooty Albatross**, **Spectacled**, **Great-winged** and **Soft-plumaged Petrels**. Throughout the day we did see probably our last of some of these birds, as well as **Tristan Albatross**. This was in a juvenile plumage which has not been photographed at sea before. Also seen was a **Atlantic Petrel**, several **White-bellied Storm-Petrels** and an **Arctic-type Tern**. We did start to see some new species with an unexpected **Cory's Shearwater** and had excellent views of a close **Oceanic Blue Shark**. We spent the afternoon and evening planning and booking our activities on St Helena and having a fun trivia quiz about our trip from South Georgia to Tristan.

### 15<sup>th</sup> April – At sea towards St Helena

Surprisingly a few birds were around first thing with half a dozen **Spectacled Petrels**, another **Cory's Shearwater** and an **Arctic Tern** before breakfast. Things slowed after that, however we did get a **White-chinned Petrel**, a **Sooty Shearwater**, **White-bellied Storm-Petrel** and an **Arctic Tern** and some new species. Of greatest interest just before lunch, was a **petrel** that was probably **Great-winged** but possible **Trindade Petrel**. However, the views were a bit too distant and brief to confirm the ID. We sailed past the first **Red-billed Tropicbird** that was sat on the sea, another **Blue Shark** and a large **Atlantic White Marlin**. We were entertained by two species of **Flying Fish** and well as extraordinary jet-propelled **Flying Squid**. Then in late afternoon was a very fun Mexican party in the observation lounge.

### 16<sup>th</sup> April – At sea towards St Helena

This was likely going to be the quietest day of the trip but we had a couple of trip ticks first and some great cetaceans. There were a couple of very distant, unidentified birds before breakfast. A flying fish was the first thing after breakfast followed by our first **Bulwer's Petrel**. The sea was flat calm – enough to get the telescopes out on the deck, as well as picnic tables and benches on the lower decks. Many enjoyed the sunshine on the fixed seats in the upper deck. Throughout the day we saw another **Bulwer's Petrel**, a distant **shearwater sp** probably **Cory's**, a **Leaches Petrel**, two more **Red-billed Tropicbirds**, and a couple of **Arctic Terns**. Nevertheless, this really turned into a cetacean day. Before lunch we had rare good views of **Blainville's Beaked-Whale**, and after lunch a reasonably close **Dwarf Sperm Whale** that melted away in typical fashion and good views of around 6 **Strap-toothed Whales**! We were also lucky to see two large **Manta Rays** interacting with each other. Throughout the day we had fun trying to photograph the **Flying-fish** and saw a mix of **Necromanser's** and **Four-winged Flying-Fish** as well as other species.

### 17<sup>th</sup> April – At sea towards St Helena

We edged closer to St Helena itself and were hoping to come into and start seeing St Helena birds. Not much before breakfast but some birds for the rest of the day including another four **Bulwer's Petrels**, a **Leaches Storm-Petrel**, four **Red-billed Tropicbirds** including two flying over ship depositing presents from above on the photographers !! In the afternoon there was a good flock of **20 Arctic Terns**. The most interesting birds though were the **Storm-Petrels** and there was a potential mixed flock of six **Leaches** and **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**. These were moulting and it is possible that these are the early breeding population. We had a large pod of around 40 **Short-finned Pilot-Whales** and interspersed with the whales were a couple of **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**. The whales were an absolute delight and we stayed with them very closely for 20 minutes watching separate groups of males and females and young animals. We watching them lolling, spy-hopping and diving before they all grouped together breathing heavily for a while before diving. We organized our onshore trips and slowed the ship down so that we would have a couple of hours in the morning watching, as we sailed in to anchor at St Helena.

### 18<sup>th</sup> April – St Helena

Another excellent day. We awoke insight of St Helena and most people were on the decks as we sailed in for a couple of hours. It was an excellent show with a **Bulwer's Petrel** and some **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrels** early and then more of the local island birds after that. These were in fine plumage and not moulting and therefore are the late breeding population. Most of the other seabirds have left the colonies by this time. Lots of our first **Brown** and **Black Noddy's**, **Red-billed Tropicbirds** and then our first **White Terns** were simply delightful. Then came the **Boobies** with lots of **Masked**, some of these, along with a fresh juvenile **Brown Booby** came in close to check out the ship. A major highlight was an 8-10 metre **Whale Shark** that was seen very well by all on board as the captain maneuvered to get us the best views. The authorities came on board and cleared the vessel in. The passengers split up soon after an early lunch on various activities, some doing local boat pelagics to some breeding islands, others went on local pelagics for more **Storm-Petrels**, some doing a guided tour for 15 **Wirebird/St Helena Plover**, and others doing tours around Jamestown and/or the island. Those on the pelagics saw many more **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrels** (500+ around the islands, 20+ on the other pelagic) and many of the same birds as we saw sailing in. Around the island we saw many introduced species including **Rock** and **Peaceful Doves**, **Common Waxbill**, **Java Sparrow**, **Common Myna** On the **Wirebird** tour there were also **African Yellow Canaries** and **Madagascar Fodys**. Some people took advantage of snorkeling activities around local wrecks. Many people spent a very enjoyable evening ashore, sampling the delights of Jamestown.

### 19<sup>th</sup> April – St Helena

More excursions happened today with people doing pelagics to the breeding islands again, **Wirebird** tours and trips around the island for a variety of sightseeing opportunities. It was raining but we were still able to see and photograph the crucial species that were similar to yesterday. There was a **Franklin's Gull** at the wharf and a huge **Whale Shark** appeared next to a Zodiac as one party was getting back on the ship. The shark hung around and caused a great deal of excitement. We were able to launch Zodiacs and snorkel from them getting great views of the **shark** underwater. It hung around the ship for most of the day. In the afternoon there was a pelagic trip to Spearey Point and island. There were lots of **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**, **Masked Boobys**, **Red-billed Tropicbirds**, **White Terns**, both **Noddys** and a few **Sooty Terns**. During this time a couple of lucky observers saw a **White-tailed Tropicbird** flying over the ship. We had a very fun BBQ on the back deck in the evening. There was lots of music and dancing which we think managed to attract some **Pan-tropical Spotted Dolphins**, **Manta Rays** and **Pipefish** that were fun to spotlight and photograph!

### 20<sup>th</sup> April – St Helena

We awoke to big numbers of **White Terns** around the ship and hoping for the **Whale Shark** to reappear again. It eventually did but while shipping passengers ashore was occurring, it didn't hang around. Watching off the

stern also produced the adult summer **Franklin's Gull** and two adult **Brown Boobys** as well as the more usual **Noddys**, **Masked Booby** and **Red-tailed Tropicbird**. The same tours were offered with the same species seen as previous days including 10 **Wirebirds** with the addition of **Cattle Egret** and **Ring-necked Pheasant**. A lucky few saw **Rough-toothed Dolphin** on a boat trip, and there was snorkelling opportunities over a ship wreck that saw **Hawksbill Turtle** and **Conger Eel**. After lunch we set sail for Ascension and had a wonderful time with excellent close views of four more **Whale Sharks** from the ship. We saw a group of 3 **Humpback Whales**, more early and late breeding **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**, and our first nominate *grallaria* race of **White-bellied Storm-Petrel**, another **Cory's type Shearwater**, along with more of the same species around the island as we headed further north again.

### 21<sup>st</sup> April – At sea towards Ascension

Previous reports describe this day as quiet but we had a surprisingly eventful one. Before breakfast we saw three **Sperm Whales**, and a **European Storm-Petrel** as well as more **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**. Then straight after were pods of **Short-finned Pilot** and **False Killer Whales**. The most interesting birds were a **White-bellied Storm Petrel**, a **South Polar Skua**, as well as flocks of **Arctic** and a first **Common Tern**. Later on we came across a pod of eight more **Sperm Whales** and we spent an hour getting fantastic views of them before heading off, and we saw another three later. For the rest of the day we continued to watch from the ship and in total had five **Bulwer's Petrels**, 10 **Leaches** and four **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**, six **Cory's Shearwaters**, six **Long-tailed Skuas** and a **White Tern**. This was another excellent cetacean day and we saw two **Orcas/Killer Whales** and a pod of 35 of our first **Clymene Dolphins** too.

### 22<sup>nd</sup> April – At sea towards Ascension

Our second of the two full days at sea heading to Ascension was also interesting and diverse with 12 pelagic bird species seen as well as other marine life. There was a presumed **St Helena Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** early in the day and then a gap until late afternoon **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels** that were moulting and likely from Ascension now. Other birds observed throughout the day were two **Bulwer's Petrels**, four **Cory's Shearwater**, a **Leaches** and two nominate **White-bellied Storm-Petrel**, **Pomarine** and three **Long-tailed Skua** plus three **White Terns**. We started to pick up more Ascension birds with a **White-tailed Tropicbird**, six **Masked Booby** and late in the afternoon increasing numbers and flocks of **Sooty Terns** with eventually 4 distant **Ascension Frigatebirds** hassling them. In the morning were three more **Sperm Whales** and in the afternoon a large pod of 35 **Striped Dolphin**. Also as we got closer to the island were 4 **Leatherback Turtles** that had captured and were eating large pink salp, some with their heads inside the salp. Surprisingly we saw these but not **Green Turtles**, which are the breeding turtles on Ascension. Through the day we also saw another **Manta Ray**, an **Oceanic Sunfish** and our first **Portugese Man-of-war** go past the ship.

### 23<sup>rd</sup> April – Ascension

A truly wonderful day started at first light as we steamed slowly towards Boatswain Bird Island on the east side of Ascension. 12,000 pairs of **Ascension Frigatebirds** breed there and many were flying over the ship in the dark. As the light came through many were flying around the ship and a steady stream moving out to sea. There is a large **Masked Booby** colony there too and on the adjacent mainland they were obviously common. We soon started picking out **Brown** and the first **Red-footed Boobies** also. There were early flocks of **Brown** and **Black Noddy's** moving out as well and there were **White** and **Sooty Terns** and **White-tailed Tropicbirds** flying around the island. An **Ascension Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** in wing moult flew high over the ship from the island and another flew into the island. We spent almost 1.5 hours there until the flights of the **frigatebirds and noddy's** etc dropped off and we then headed around the north coast to clear the ship at the port of Georgetown. We notice lots of dead **Black Triggerfish** and were told that this was a natural phenomenon due to high water temperatures and low oxygen levels. We saw lots of these live fish later in Georgetown. This was done quickly and we were allowed to land there and congregate in a group, where several **frigatebirds** were flying around the beach. We then headed off for a tour of the island, visiting the old turtle holding baths, and heading to a spectacular **Sooty Tern** colony with 250,000 pairs! This was excellent for viewing and photography and we had 30-40 minutes there. We then headed up the mountains of island visiting nurseries for the native plants, where a vagrant **House Martin** was seen by some. On the island are introduced **Common Mynas**, **Common Waxbills**, and **African Yellow Canary's**. We then went for a swim and a very nice meal at the Two Boats Restaurant. After some free time we had an early dinner back on the ship. We then

congregated after dark, back on the jetty, had an orientation talk and watched a short video about the natural history of the island. We were then split into groups with a guide each and were taken to **Atlantic Green Turtles** once they had settled down to lay their eggs. This was an amazing and privileged experience. There were lots of photos taken under red light and we returned to the ship elated with what we were allowed to do and witness, we were late to bed.

### 24<sup>th</sup> April – Ascension

We were woken early at 4.15am for Zodiac transport and congregated again on the wharf. Some fishermen were cleaning their catch and some saw a **Galapagos Shark** waiting for tidbits. We were again lead to the beach to join the **turtles again**. We were again very fortunate to spend time with five of these amazing animals and watched as some went back to the ocean in daylight giving better photographic opportunities. We then had the morning to ourselves in Georgetown, and some returned to the **Sooty Tern** colony to spend more time there. We sailed off after lunch down the east coast on the way seeing more of the local seabirds with excellent views of **Ascension Frigatebirds** and **White-tailed Tropicbirds** flying around the ship. Slapping and splashes in the ocean turned out to be jumping **Atlantic White Marlin**. We were then treated to a surprise additional visit to Boatswain Bird Island where we marveled again in the spectacle of thousands of **frigatebirds** and all three **Boobies**, **Red** and **White-tailed Tropicbirds**, **Sooty** and **White Terns** and both **Noddys**. This time we were able to see several **Ascension Band-tailed Storm-Petrels** mostly in fresh plumage but one in primary moult. A pod of 20 **Common Bottle-nosed Dolphins** caused great excitement coming very close to the ship, surfacing and bow-riding. We then headed off north again to start our five day journey to Cape Verde. For the rest of the afternoon we spent our time looking at the local seabirds and in particular grilling the very interesting **Ascension Band-tailed** and **Leaches Storm-Petrels**, whilst looking for cetaceans for the rest of the afternoon.

### 25<sup>th</sup> April – At sea towards Cape Verde

We awoke to the first of our five final days at sea, heading towards the Cape Verde Islands. The day got off to a flying start with a dark phase **South Polar Skua** chasing a **tropicbird!** After breakfast were still seeing small numbers of Ascension birds that continued throughout the day with the most numerous being 200 **Sooty Terns**. We recorded four **Cory's Shearwaters**, 10 **Ascension Band-rumped** and 50 **Leaches Storm-Petrels**, a **Pomarine** and five **Long-tailed Skuas**, two **White Terns** and 10 **Brown Noddys**. We did come across two **Blainville's Beaked Whales** that travelling the opposite direction to the ship. There were also two pods of **Short-finned Pilot-Whales**, one of which hung around and the ship was maneuvered once again to get great views and spend some time with these animals. Late in the day two **Cory's-type Shearwaters** flew close across the bow and photos showed that one was our first **Cape Verde Shearwater**. We have a very interesting identification evening discussing ID features of **diving-petrels**, **prions** and **storm-petrels**.

### 26<sup>th</sup> April - At sea towards Cape Verde

Off to a great start again this morning too and it has become obvious that there was a flurry of birds early morning. Again two Cory's-type Shearwaters flew close across the bow and photos showed that one was our first **Scopoli's Shearwater** of the trip. After that though a reasonably relaxing day with further totals of four **Bulwer's Petrels**, three **Cory's Shearwaters**, 15 **Leaches Storm-Petrels**, a **White-tailed Tropicbird**, **Long-tailed Skua** and 30 **Sooty** plus two **Arctic Terns**. This part of the trip is known to be relative sparse for birds but we found it very rich for cetaceans as well as turtles. On this day a new cetacean for the voyage, a **Bryde's Whale** was seen by some. In the later morning we were very fortunate to come across a large group of 50 **Melon-headed Whales** that were accompanied by 15 **False Killer Whales**. Later were 30, some jumping, **Pantropical Spotted Dolphins** and we spent a thrilling hour with 30 close **Sperm Whales**. In addition the flying fish of several different species including **Bar-tailed** and **Small Clearwings**, large **Necromanser** and **Four-winged Flying fish**, and small **Smurf Flying fish** kept us entertained constantly throughout the rest of the voyage, it was great fun to try and get photographs of them. We went across the Equator today and there was a fun ceremony for newbies at doing this by sea, some of whom were covered in jelly, chocolate and strawberry sauce by King Neptune before washing it off in a water filled Zodiac. This was followed by a great and fun barbeque and then lots of dancing into the early hours.

## 27<sup>th</sup> April - At sea towards Cape Verde

This was possibly the quietest bird day yet, with just 22 individuals, each one causing excitement on the bridge! In total we recorded three **Bulwer's Petrel**, four **Cory's Shearwaters** that were always of interest for potential **Scopoli's** and **Cape Verde Shearwaters**, 19 **Leaches Storm-Petrels**, a **White-tailed Tropicbird**, a surprise **Red-footed Booby** that was photographed catching and eating a flying fish, three **Long-tailed Skuas** and 10 **Arctic Terns**. This was another exciting cetacean and our best fish day too! Three **Sperm Whales** were seen in the mid distance but didn't come close. A big surprise was some **Risso's Dolphins** including one that jumped completely out of the water that is unusual for this species – they are of a noticeably dark form in the part of the world. Of most excitement were two large pods of dolphins with up to 600 **White-bellied/Long-beaked Spinners** that we enjoyed watching feeding, jumping and spinning for an hour and they performed really well. There was a large pod of 45 **Pantropical Spotted Dolphins** that we also enjoyed. There were some notable fish with a **Blue Shark**, a **Manta Ray**, a **Swordfish** and an **Atlantic White Marlin**. Also of note were a **Moon Jellyfish** and amazing records of both a **Dragonfly** and a **Day flying moth** this far out into the ocean!

## 28<sup>th</sup> April - At sea towards Cape Verde

This was a more interesting day for birds and our best day for cetaceans and ocean-going turtles yet. One of the most notable birds were a **Scopoli's Shearwater** plus five **Cory's** and a **Sooty Shearwater** were also seen. The most important though was a **Cape Verde Storm-Petrel** in fine breeding plumage and noticeable for its small bill and compact structure, which flew around the dolphins, that were distracting! There was also an increase in **Leaches Storm-Petrels**, with 30 counted. Each and every **shearwater** and most **storm-petrels** were photographed to help with ID. Other birds were six **Bulwer's Petrel**, two **Red-footed Booby**, two **Pomarine** and four **Long-tailed Skuas** and 20 **Arctic Terns**. It was a cetacean day though with a **Blue Whale** giving a characteristically high blow, two **Dwarf Sperm Whales** were typically logging on the surface as the ship passed them. By far the rarest observation of the whole day and possible the rarest of the trip was of a **Gervais Beaked-Whale** that passed the ship and was photographed. In the distant were six impressive **Orcas/Killer Whales** with a large male repeatedly jumping. A pod of six **Rough-toothed Dolphin** came into the ship and bow-rode briefly too! There was another pod of 10 **Short-finned Pilot Whales**, and we had better, prolonged and close views of 40 **Clymene/Short-beaked Spinner** and 300 **Pantropical Spotted Dolphins**! We were in warm, tropical turtle waters and we saw six go past the ship close today which were an **Olive Ridley**, an **Atlantic Green**, a **Leatherback** and two **Loggerhead Turtles**. Jellyfish today were three **Portuguese Man-of-war** and six **Medusa Jellyfish** that were new for the trip. The excitement mounted as we knew that we would awaken back in the Western Palearctic. There was a Spanish afternoon with a happy hour with lots of margaritas that was great fun.

## 29<sup>th</sup> April - At sea towards Cape Verde

Those interested in Western Palearctic birds were on deck for first light and watched throughout the day. This proved very rewarding and we were soon watching the first of 10 **Bulwer's Petrels**, but it was **shearwater** and **storm-petrel** day. Notably there were three **Cape Verde Shearwaters** identified amongst the 30 **Cory's Shearwaters**. Another **Cape Verde Storm-Petrel**, as well as a possible **Wilson's**, our first (two) **White-faced** and 20 **Leaches Storm-Petrels**. Other birds were two **Red-billed Tropicbirds**, three **Long-tailed Skuas** and 10 **Arctic Terns**. There was great excitement as the daylight waned with two **Boyd's Shearwaters** coming close to the ship. It was another great cetacean day with first large and close pods of a total of 125 **Short-finned Pilot Whales**. A large beaked whale was seen breaching in the mid-distance several times and was identified from photos as a **True's Beaked Whale**. Later in the day there was another possible **Gervais Beaked Whale** which we are waiting examination of photos for, and brief views of two more **Orcas/Killer Whales**. A friendly pod of 28 **Common Bottlenose Dolphins** performed very well to add to the show. This was another good turtle day too with another **Olive Ridley** and three **Loggerhead Turtles** seen. There were another 10 **Medusa Jellyfish**. There was a Captain's function from 5 pm that was quite emotional as we were coming to the end of our amazing voyage and realized that we had made some very strong bonds and likely life-long friends.

## 30<sup>th</sup> April – Arrival and disembark Praia, Cape Verde

We finished with a very exciting final birding day of the expedition. Most people were on the top deck from first light hoping for some more of the endemic seabirds. We could see the lights of Praia 6-7 NM away and had just 40 minutes of daylight time sailing in. During this short period we were able to find two **Cape Verde Shearwaters** and two **White-faced** and a likely **Cape Verde Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**, as well as three **Arctic Terns** in the half light. Around the harbour were a **Grey Heron**, a few **Sanderling**, a **Ringed Plover**, a couple of **Ruddy Turnstone**, and a **Whimbrel**. Then we started the laborious process of clearing the ship and enabling passengers to go on their various day trips. Seen at the harbour was a **Brown Booby** flying past, a **Red-billed Tropicbird** against the cliffs, a **Grey Heron** and our first land endemics in **Cape Verde Kestrel** and **Iago Sparrows**. Those continuing on the West African Pelagic to Holland were cleared and off first as they had to be back by 1600. Those leaving had until around 1900. WildWings had arranged land birding excursions for both groups. There were several sites visited including the desert, the botanic gardens, the mountains and the reservoir. In the desert areas were lots of **Bar-tailed desert and Black-crowned Sparrow** as well as three **Hoopoe Larks** that all gave excellent views. There were lots of **Spanish** and **Iago Sparrows** and good looks at the endemic race of **Spectacled Warbler** as well as more **Cape Verde Kestrels** plus **Brown-necked Ravens**. Surprises were two **Western Ospreys** and two **Dolphin sp** seen jumping in the surf. Some lucky people flushed a couple of the resident **Common Quail**. Finally a single of the endemic race of **Cream-coloured Courser** was found that gave good views. At some allotments where we saw **Western Cattle Egrets** more **Bar-tailed Desert** and **Black-crowned Finch-Larks**, our first **Cape Verde Swifts** and **Eurasian Collared Doves** as well as **Common Waxbills**. A walk to a wetland area by the sea was good for wading birds including **Western Reef Egret**, 3 summer plumaged **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Ringed** and **Kentish Plover** and a **Whimbrel**. In the Botanic Gardens were lots of the endemic race of **Blackcap** and a single stunning **Grey-headed Kingfisher**. We were also able to locate a couple of **Cape Verde Cane Warblers** as well as introduced **Helmeted Guineafowl**. Another **Cape Verde Kestrel** flew and perched on a distant rock outcrop. At another rock outcrop we spotted a stunning and distinctive roosting **Cape Verde Barn Owl!** This is also a **Cape Verde Buzzard** site and after 30 minutes or so one flew around the rocks initially being mobbed by another **Cape Verde Kestrel**. There were also more **Cape Verde Swifts** and close **Spectacled Warblers** gave excellent views. A large reservoir was an excellent site but had been almost completely drained by the local farmers and will surely be completely dry in a month. Some remaining pools were full of trapped small fish and wading birds has a feast dining on them. There were 5 **Bourne's/Cape Verde Purple Herons** that were the dominant species but the afternoons seem to be best the best time as they were not seen during early parts of the day. There were also four **Western Cattle Egrets** and 10 **Little Egrets** doing the same. There were some interesting waders with 10 **Black-winged Stilt**, a **Greenshank** calling incessantly and a **Common Sandpiper**. As we watched from a dam wall we were a bit shocked to see a female **Cape Verde Kestrel** fly in clutching a recently captured **Cape Verde Cane Warbler** which it promptly started to devour as its mate came in as well. Also at the reservoir were more **Grey-headed Kingfisher**, live **Cape Verde Cane Warbler** and **Spectacled Warblers**. Another surprise was a rarity in the form of a ragged **Red-rumped Swallow**. This completed a very successful day around Santiago Island. Those continuing returned to the ship late afternoon to carry on the West African pelagic whilst the departing group headed for a clean-up at a hotel in Praia and then to the airport, while yet others stayed on to try and catch up with some of the other Cape Verde birds.

This completed a highly successful and thoroughly enjoyable trip. Each and every one of the participants were fantastic and made their own contributions – it really was an excellent group. The staff on the ship were excellent and made every effort to work with us to achieve what everyone wanted to do and maximize the outcomes of the trip. The birds, cetaceans and turtles were spectacular and this really is one of the best trips to do in the world.....

**NB: The Atlantic Odyssey will next sail on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, bookings are now being taken!**

24/7/18JBG

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