

Expedition Log Book
VOYAGE #2292
BIRDING DOWNUNDER
December 13th – 30th 2005

Tuesday 13th December

Bags were out at 6.30am before going to breakfast. Weather was grey and overcast - we are sure Dunedin has had better days. The group all met at dinner last night at the hotel. This morning Tony Marr, ornithologist from the ship joined us and made sure we were all present and correct before accompanying us on the coach to the ship. An earlier coach had taken half the bags to the ship. Once on board the vessel we had to wait until the remainder of the bags were loaded. Staff had collected our passports for presentation to the customs officer who was waiting to clear the vessel.

We departed the wharf at 1000 and headed down the harbor. Soon after we departed we were all summoned to the lecture room on the 200 level for an introduction to the ship and staff, and the theory part of our compulsory life boat drill. Nathan (Expedition Leader) introduced us to all the staff. He also introduced us to the NZ Representative and the Enderby Trust Scholarship winners who were also traveling with us. The Enderby Trust was founded by the Russ family to enable young persons aged between 18-30 to experience these islands. A number of scholarships are given away each season.

As we cleared the Otago Heads there was a little bit of swell/sea as the NE wind was blowing over the outgoing (or ebb) tide. We farewelled the pilot and headed south. Traveling conditions were good as the sea was aft of the port beam. Conditions got even better as we cleared Cape Saunders and set a course towards the Snares. Lunch was served at 1300 hours then the remainder of the afternoon was free until 1600 when there was the practical part of the Life Boat Drill. Many folk took the opportunity to “bird” from the upper deck. We had both Northern and Southern royals, shy and white capped albatross and a Bullers albatross. There were plenty of sooty, Bullers and occasionally a Hutton’s shearwater was seen. It was decided that most of the prions would be of the fairy type.

At 1600 the alarm was sounded and we had to report to muster stations with life jackets. We practiced getting into the lifeboats before being dismissed. At 1700 there was a combined Snares Island briefing from Rodney. He gave a power point presentation with an overview of the natural and cultural history, then he explained what we hoped to achieve tomorrow. Nathan followed this presentation with a Naiad briefing – an outline of the do’s and dont’s in the RiB’s.

The bar opened at 6pm with the staff serving. Then it was dinner time. Dinner was served in the two dining rooms on the 300 level. Sea conditions continued to be relatively flat, which made diner a very pleasant occasion. Some great wines from the bar and great food by John and Sam was the prefect way to finish off the day. After dinner there was an opportunity for those that wanted to do the “check list” for the day.

Wednesday 14th December

Still very good conditions when we woke. We had an ETA of 0915 at the Snares Island. Breakfast was available at 0815. The NE weather/sea made the normally sheltered eastern coast a little “bumpy” so the vessel steamed around to South Bay. Once in South Bay the conditions were great. The Naiads were made ready and Rodney, Shane and Nathan were launched. Group 1 headed away first. They had a good crossing of South Bay but as they passed through between Broughton and the main island it was a little rougher. There was wind against the tide and the seas were standing up, with some of the standing waves being 3 meters tall. I think some of the passengers wondered whether it was safe to continue. There was no risk despite both Shane and Nathan shipping a wave each. Once we got inside Station Cove the seas flattened off and we were able to get cameras and binoculars out. Everybody took great photos of the Snares crested penguins. There were good sightings of both the tomtit and the fernbird. The surprise of the day was the grey tailed tattler (a migratory species from eastern Siberia).

Sea conditions were not suitable for going to the “Penguin Slide” so we headed back to the ship after about 1.5 hours. Sea conditions appeared to be improving. We cruised some of the western coastline and sea caves on the way back to the ship. With group 1 safely back on board we loaded group 2 and headed way. The passage between Broughton and the main island had improved considerably. Group 2 spent a good 1.5 hours in and around Station Cove. The tattler was still there. There were good views of NZ fur seals, NZ sealions and one immature elephant seal.

The Snares Island

Situated approximately 209 km southwest of Bluff, the Snares are 243 ha in extent and consist of two small rocky islands and several rocks, including the five islands of the so-called western reef - Tahi, Rua, Toru, Wha and Rima.

The islands were discovered by Vancouver in 1791. Just over one year later, December, 1772, the crew of the *Britannia* sighted the Snares and named them the Sunday Islands. The name Sunday gave way to that given by the first discoverer – the Snares.

Historical records of these islands are sketchy. Little is known of the activities of sealers which obviously worked these islands. It appears a gang of four, who were escaped convicts from Norfolk Island, were marooned on the Snares between 1810-1817 from the ship *Adventure*, the reason given was that the ship was running short of provisions and the captain gave the men the choice of going ashore or of starving afloat. The men were given a few potatoes which they planted. During their long exile one of the four became deranged – this alarmed the others so much that they pushed him over a cliff. The remaining three were rescued by an American ship the *Enterprise* which reached Philadelphia on 11 May 1818.

There are no recorded shipwrecks from the island despite their position almost directly in the path of vessels sailing from Australia towards Cape Horn. It was intended at one

stage to erect a lighthouse on the island but with the opening of the Panama Canal the need for a lighthouse largely disappeared.

The Snares group are free of introduced predators and for this reason they have a large number of breeding birds. The islands are especially famous by the endemic Snares crested penguin *Eudyptes robusta* (breeding pairs: about 25,000 in total) and large colonies of the Buller's albatross *Thalassarche [bulleri] bulleri* (a population of 5000-8500 breeding pairs). These return to the islands in mid-December, most eggs are laid in January and vast majority of the fledglings and adults leaving by September-October also the colony of the Salvin's mollymawk *Thalassarche [cauta] salvini* (on Toru and Rima islets in the Western chain: estimated 1000 pairs). The islands also have endemic and very distinct looking tomtit *Petroica macrocephala dannefaerdi*, the so-called black tomtit. There is also the Snares fernbird *Bowdleria punctata candata*, and the Snares Island snipe *Coenocorypha aucklandica nuegeli* which is found in good numbers. The Snares Cape pigeon (petrel) *Daption capense australe* is rather unique with its restricted white area to the upperwing. It breeds at many localities around main Snares Island and stacks, and also breeds on western chain. The sooty shearwater *Puffinus griseus* has an estimated population of 2.7 million pairs breeding in the Snares group. Mottled petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata* and Southern diving petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix* are breeding whilst broad-billed prion *Pachyptila vittata* breeds in low numbers only.

When Group 2 returned one of the Naiads was lifted on board while the others did a quick trip back to the Station Cove area with the staff and a couple of the crew. Lunch was served while they were away. Once the staff came back and the Naiads were on board the *Spirit of Enderby* set sail to the Auckland Islands some 120 nm to the south.

Because of the late finish to the Naiad cruising the afternoons program was amended. The Auckland Island briefing was postponed until tomorrow morning and the video "Beyond the Roaring Forties" was rescheduled for 1600 hours. The NE sea meant a reasonably comfortable ride, just a slight roll now and then. Low cloud meant that it was not the best "birding" but still good. The bar opened at 1800 and at 1830 there was a Snares Island recap. Rodney led the recap which was an opportunity to review what we had seen and learnt at the Snares. It was also an opportunity to ask questions. At about this time *Spirit of Enderby* was crossing a trench on the ocean floor and because of the upwelling of water it is always a good place for birds. It is also a good place for fishing and there were at least four fishing ships sighted (on the radar). Most people took to the decks after dinner to enjoy the numerous birds that were following the ship. The "Bird List" was done at 2130 by Tony and Steve.

Thursday 15th December

When we woke we were anchored in the sheltered waters of Port Ross off Sandy Bay, Enderby Island. We couldn't see a lot as heavy fog covered the island. Vicky made the wake up call for Breakfast at 0700. After breakfast, while John and Sam were putting lunch making food out on the tables we had a detailed briefing from Nathan on Enderby Island. He had outlined the options for the day which included a walk around the island or a walk across to the western cliffs and back to the beach. He also ran through the Dept. of Conservation Minimum Impact Code for behavior on the island plus the importance of washing and cleaning boots. The briefing over we made lunch and cleaned boots. The Naiads were lowered and the process of getting us all ashore started.

When everybody was ashore the Naiad was tied off and we started walking across the island. There were a good number of NZ sealions ashore on the beach, both males and females. The Beachmasters were concentrated in the middle of the beach where the bulk of the cows were. Not all the cows were there yet. We were to discover that there was still a large number at Pebble Point. They hang out there and only move to Sandy Bay Beach when they are ready to give birth.



The bulbinela was past its best, but the Anisotome was at the peak of flowering. At the end of the boardwalk Nathan and Tony led those that wanted to look for the snipe. Everybody got great views of several birds. Then it was onto the cliff edge to look for the light mantled sooty albatross, there were two birds nesting on the ledge plus one other just resting. In the water below the birds was a giant squid – the body would have been 1.5 – 2 meters long and the tentacles at least that much again. It appeared to be sick but still alive??? as it seemed to be moving around (maybe it was just caught up in the current). This was the point at which people had to decide whether to walk around the island or go back to the beach. A small group came back to the beach, with the majority deciding to walk around the island. The weather had improved a little bit, cloud had lifted but rain was threatening.

The Derrycastle

The weather was thick on the night of March 20, 1887 when the barque Derrycastle ran aground on the northern tip of Enderby Island. The ship broke up quickly and of the crew of 23 only 8 managed to scramble ashore. The survivors found a small hut on the island but were without food and fire. A fire was later lit by exploding the cap of a revolver cartridge which one of the survivors found in his pocket. After being on the island for 92 days and having been able to see a castaway depot across the water in Port Ross, the survivors found an old axe head buried in the sand. With this they fashioned a punt and two of the men successfully sailed/paddled to the provision depot. The two men returned in a boat with provisions and clothes. Within a few days all of the survivors were established at the Port Ross depot. Here they remained until July 19, when the steamer *Awarua* put into Port Ross while on a sealing cruise.

The group made slow progress around the island, simply because there was so much to see and photograph. Unfortunately the weather did pack up and it rained. It was not a heavy rain and there was not a lot of wind with it. It just made photographing difficult. The yellow-eyed penguins really enjoyed it. There were dozens of them out on the rocks and tramping backwards and forwards across the beach.

*Blades ochre-gold
And Olive Brown
Lush lettuce-kelp-beds flow
In waters cold
Where thoughts might drown
And dreams are bound to go*

*The tresses sweep
In sapphire foam
As breakers roll ashore
From ocean deep
And worlds unknown
Where souls are set to soar*

*Huge snorting bulls
Testosterone
In muscled furry form
Attention pulls
To watch their home
Where battle is the norm*

*And visiting
This misty day
In rain-gear human guise
We watch life swing
At Sandy Bay
Through wonder-laden eyes.*

Birds of the Auckland Islands

The Auckland Islands is the main breeding ground for the white-capped albatross *Thalassarche [cauta] cauta* with an estimated population of 65,000 pairs, chiefly on Disappointment Island. Other albatrosses breeding include the Gibson's wandering albatross *Diomedea [exulans] gibsoni*, with an estimated ca. 7000 breeding pairs - main population on Adams Island. The Southern royal albatross *Diomedea [epomophora] epomophora* is represented by only 60 breeding pairs on Enderby and Adams Island. The light mantled sooty albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata* is quite abundant and tends to concentrate around the southern end of the main island, with an estimated population of 5000 pairs. The Northern giant petrel *Macronectes giganteus* is a common breeder. Other tubenoses that breed in the group include Cape petrels (approx. 200 pairs), which breeds mainly on Beacon Rocks, the white-headed petrel *Pterodroma lessonii* and the fulmar prion *Pachyptila crassirostris*. Sooty shearwater breeds chiefly on offshore islands whilst Antarctic prion *Pachyptila desolata banksi* and white-chinned petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* are breeding throughout group in various sized colonies. The grey-backed storm petrel *Garrodia nereis*, white-faced storm petrel *Pelagodroma marina* and black-bellied storm petrel *Pachyptila belcheri* are widely distributed as is the Sub-Antarctic little shearwater *Puffinus assimilis elegans* though in much smaller number. The Sub-Antarctic form of the common diving petrel breeds numerously - especially around coastal fringes, whilst the South Georgian diving petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus* has been recorded breeding on Enderby and Dundas (present status not fully understood).

Yellow-eyed penguins are found throughout the island group but there are good populations on Enderby and Rose Island. The rockhopper penguin population has declined but some traditional colonies still exist on both east and west coasts.

The Auckland Island shag breeds throughout the entire group, whilst the Auckland Island flightless teal occurs only on the free-predator islets. The Auckland Island snipe also breeds on most offshore islands, including Ewing, Disappointment, Adams and Enderby. The Auckland Island rail breeds on Adams and Disappointment Island.

Banded dotterel *Charadrius bicinctus* breeds on Enderby Island. The Southern skua is found in scattered numbers throughout the group, whilst moderate numbers of Southern black-backed gull and red-bill gull breed throughout the group. White-fronted tern and Antarctic terns breed in small colonies throughout the group. The Red-crowned parakeet is predominate on the larger offshore Islands, whilst the yellow-crowned parakeet is found on the main Auckland Island. The local form of the New Zealand pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae aucklandicus* is common chiefly around the coastal areas. Long-tailed cuckoo and welcome swallow also breed on the island. Grey duck and the New Zealand falcon breed in small numbers, but with main concentration on the southern end of the main island. Silvereye and Auckland Island tomtit *P. M. marrineri* are common throughout. Bellbird is probably the most numerous of the bush birds, while the tui is present throughout the group in good numbers.

Self introduced breeders include the mallard, skylark, hedge sparrow, song thrush, blackbird, chaffinch, goldfinch, redpoll, house sparrow and starling.

Migratory waders include the knot, sharp-tailed sandpiper, curlew sandpiper, red-necked stint, turnstone, Eastern-bartailed godwit and Asiatic black tailed godwit. The white-faced heron is a straggler and the Arctic tern is occasionally seen.

Nathan ran a shuttle service to and from the boat as required. The three DoC workers that were on the island doing the sealion census came onboard for a shower and also joined us for dinner. The weather improved slightly around 1900 hours but closed in again later in the evening. Everybody was back on board by 1900. Many folk enjoyed a drink in the bar before dinner was served at 1930 hrs. The *Spirit of Enderby* stayed at anchor for the evening and was due to depart for Carnley Harbour about 0400 hours.

Friday 16th December

The *Spirit of Enderby* lifted anchor at about 0300 and shifted down the east coast of the Auckland Islands to Carnley Harbour. We entered the eastern passage at approx 0600 with calm but overcast weather and a light rain. With those conditions it was possible to steam directly through to the western end of the harbour. We dropped anchor below Fairchilds Garden shortly after 0800. Breakfast was available from 0700 – 0750 then at 0750 we attended a briefing on the days activities. Nathan described the walk up the hill to the SW Cape albatross colony and explained that those that did not take the walk would enjoy a Naiad cruise around the coastline of Adams Island and if conditions permitted through Victoria Passage to the bottom of the albatross colony. Twenty three people lined up for the walk along with Rodney, Dr Hugh and Warwick. Weather conditions were not too bad when they left the ship. It actually looked like it might clear. Shane and Nathan were driving, and they took two boat loads each and landed them on the wave platform. When they were all ashore Rodney led off and the rain started. It progressively got heavier and heavier throughout the morning. They made reasonable time up the hill stopping now and then to let everybody catch up. Warwick and Hugh brought up the rear of the party. Fortunately it wasn't too cold and so once we got to the colony we were able to sit (in the rain) and enjoy the both the birds and the scenery. Rodney led a small group up on the tussock plateau beyond the shy albatross colony to look for Gibson's wandering albatross. Three were seen, two of them in the distance, however the third poked its head up not far from us. They were difficult to see amongst the tussock. At 1130 we headed back down the hill to the landing. The group spread out and there was a big gap between the front and the back. Shane and Nathan took the groups back as they arrived at the landing. To speed everything up the last two loads were picked up off the rocks directly below the ridge.

Those that had zodiac cruised had had a very rewarding time. A NZ falcon, with a bellbird in its talons was sighted and flightless teal were also seen. The Victoria passage was calm and so they were able to cruise around to the bottom of the albatross colony.

When the walkers were back on board and the Naiads were lashed down the *Spirit of Enderby* lifted its anchor and headed back towards the eastern entrance of Carnley Harbour. John and Sam served lunch and the walkers dried out – the corridors looked a little like a Chinese laundry. With lunch over most of the folk were on the decks “birding” – surprise surprise. Now that the walk was over the weather was improving. The sun came out and it was very pleasant. Another falcon was seen from the vessel as it steamed along.

There was very little swell/sea outside the harbour and we set a course to Macquarie Island. Rodney's lecture on the history of the Auckland Islands was postponed 1 hour to allow us to enjoy the views of the southern coast of Adams Island and all the birds that

were there. At 1600 Rodney gave us an illustrated lecture on the history of the Auckland's from discovery in 1806 through to the present day. He discussed the sealing era then the settlement era. Many of us were surprised to learn that both Maori and European had attempted to settle these islands. One of the more colourful periods in the history of the islands was the shipwreck era 1864 – 1907 when at least 10 ships came to grief on these islands. The lecture also included information on the various animals including pigs, goats, cats, mice, rabbits and cattle that had been liberated on the islands at various stages.

The “birding” continued to be some of the best we had enjoyed – sea conditions were ideal and just about everybody was out on the deck at some stage either photographing or simply observing the birds.

Dinner was served at 1930 and this was followed by the feature film “American Pie – The Wedding”.

Saturday 17th December

Difficult to believe but the weather and sea conditions just continue to get better. Just a gentle rocking motion overnight. Breakfast was a little later this morning a chance to sleep in or get out on the deck and do some birding. We were making really good time, with an ETA of around 2300hours at Macquarie Island. With such good (calm) sea conditions cetacean spotting was on the cards and we were not disappointed. Four Southern bottle nose whales were sighted this was followed by four strapped tooth whales Debi got a great view of one directly under the bow of the ship. There was another sighting of what was almost certainly another *Mesoplodon sp*, nobody was certain what they were.

After breakfast Vicky set up the shop in the Port side dining room and then invited those who wanted to join her for some retail therapy. Many folk took the opportunity to purchase stamps and postcards for posting at Macquarie Island. They could well beat the mail home as there is not a North bound (to Hobart) ship due for some time.

The lunch call was made at 1330 then the afternoon was relatively free. The sun came out briefly but for most of the day it was heavy overcast with fog of varying degrees of thickness. At 1500 hours the video “Mysteries of the Ocean Wanderers” was screened. This documentary filmed on the Crozet Islands in the South Indian Ocean highlighted the problem of albatross' being caught on long lines – and the affects of this on the population. The documentary also had some great footage of light mantled sooty albatross, king penguins and elephant seals. Shane and Nathan completed the days lectures with an illustrated lecture and briefing on Macquarie Island. Shane and Vicky are on leave from the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service and Shane has been involved in the management and resupply of Macquarie Island. There were some great photos and in his presentation he talked about the problem of introduced animals and in particular the work done to eradicate cats. He also discussed the proposed plan to remove the rabbits and rats/mice from the island and the problem of convincing the government to fund such an ambitious project.

Tony and Rodney ran the bar this evening. It was very quiet with most people taking the opportunity of an improvement (fog cleared) in the weather to be outside on the decks. Dinner was served at 1930 hours. The “bird list” was read at 2130 hours.

Sunday 18th December.

The *Spirit of Enderby* dropped anchor at Buckles Bay around midnight (all except the crew were asleep). When we woke this morning we couldn't see the island – it was shrouded in mist. The vessel remained on NZDT, the island operates on Australian Eastern Time – so they were two hours behind us. Breakfast was served at 0815 (ships time). At 0900 (0700 local time) Nathan had two Naiads lowered and headed to the shore to bring off the ranger staff. Four rangers came on board, Keith, Georgie, John and Damien (ANARE carpenter), who would stay with us for the two days that we were here. Once they were on board we lifted anchor and steamed to Sandy Bay about 40mins south of Buckles Bay. Rodney, Shane and Warwick drove the Naiads down cruising the coastline. While we were cruising there was a briefing in the lecture room for the Sandy Bay landing. Just before the vessel got to Sandy Bay there was a large pod of killer whales seen between the ship and the shore.

GEOLOGY OF MACQUARIE ISLAND

Macquarie Island, which has never been part of a continent, is geologically unusual. It emerged above sea level between 90,000 and 300,000 years ago and is a rare example of uplifted oceanic crust formed about 27 million years ago at depths of between 2,000 and 4,000 metres. An outstanding example of a major stage of the earth's evolutionary history, it is perhaps the best preserved fragment of deep oceanic crust known above sea level. It is therefore of great interest to scientists studying the phenomena on sea-floor spreading and continental drift. Volcanic blocks (mainly pillow lavas), basaltic dykes, and various sediments compose about 80 percent of the land.

Geologically, Macquarie Island is very young: the oldest accurately dated rocks so far collected from there are between 9.7 million and 11.5 million years old. The oldest accurately dated organic feature on the island is a peat deposit about 13,000 years old. Macquarie Island emerged from the sea as a result of uplift created through interaction of the Indo-Australian and Pacific plates, a process that continues today all along the Macquarie Ridge, which the Macquarie Island Nature Reserve is the exposed crest of. The area is still seismically active, and large earthquakes occur frequently on Macquarie Ridge. About once a year there is a tremor of magnitude 6.2 or greater on the Richter scale, and approximately once a decade a tremor of magnitude 7.2 or greater.

Conditions were ideal for landing at Sandy Bay, and after the rangers and safety barrels had been landed we were all ferried ashore. We left our lifejackets at the landing and were free to roam, within the boundaries that Nathan had explained at the briefing. To the south of the landing there were a large number of royal penguins on the beach and a walk way up to a large royal penguin colony.

To the north there was a breeding colony of king penguins. On the beaches there was a large number of elephant seals. The breeding animals had been and gone and all that remained were a few pups or weaners and a large number of subadults. The pups were very curious and if we sat they would come up to us. The subadults were sparring and fighting but were not a threat to us.

Out on the adjacent wave platform there were a few Macquarie Island shags roosting. It was not hard to fill in the time. Some of the best observations were had just sitting and watching. The kings were very curious and would walk right over top of you if you sat there. They looked rather stately while the royals could only be described as feisty. They were also curious but kept



their distance. The chicks in the royal colony were about 3 weeks old and were still trying to hide under the parent. The king penguins were on eggs but there were still a few “oakum boys” scattered throughout the colony.

Everybody was taken back to the ship for lunch (we were not allowed to bring any food onto the island). There was another opportunity to return to the beach for the afternoon. Not everybody took up the offer, some preferring to remain on board. Shuttles brought people back to the ship at 1700, 1800 and the last came off at 1900. Dinner was served at 1930. The ship remained at anchor in Sandy Bay.

Monday 19th December - Macquarie Island

Spirit of Enderby remained at anchor until about 0430 hours when it lifted its anchor and quietly steamed down the coast towards Lustianna Bay at the Southern end of the Island. Nathan came on the PA at 0630 hours to say that we were there but there was VERY heavy fog, about 20 meters visibility. This meant that there was a risk in launching the Naiads (they might not find the ship again) and with only 20 metres visibility we would not get to see much because we had to cruise 50 metres off the coast. He announced that we would steam back to Buckles Bay.

Breakfast was served at 0815 and then we were again summoned to the lecture room for a Buckles Bay briefing. There was heavy fog at Buckles Bay but Rodney and Shane were confident that they could find the landing site and get to and from the ship safely. The Australian Antarctic program (ANARE) have a research and weather station on Macquarie Island and it is situated at Buckles Bay. Our landing included a guided tour of the station area and a visit to the base. It was a wet landing and once ashore we were divided into 4 groups.

All the groups eventually ended up at the station mess, where the chef had prepared scones and cups of tea/coffee for everybody. There were also some souvenirs for sale including t-shirts, caps and calendars. The station staff, of which there were 15, were very hospitable and showed us around. At 1400 (ships time) Rodney and Shane started ferrying us back to the ship. The fog had become heavier and both the drivers did well to find the ship.

With everybody on board *Spirit of Enderby* lifted its anchor and departed for Campbell Island. Lunch was served at 1500 and the remainder of the afternoon was free to relax, catch up on diaries, download and edit photos. Sea conditions weren't too bad for traveling with a 1 – 1.5 metre swell from the NE but the heavy fog made birding difficult.

MACQUARIE ISLAND CLIMATE

Macquarie Island lies in the path of the West Wind Drift just north of the Antarctic Convergence. The surface water around the island is too warm for sea ice to form and drifting icebergs are rare.

The weather is generally cold, wet and windy. As a member of the first Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition in 1948 observed of the island's weather, "For days on end the upper plateau would be shrouded in mist and a great wall of fog would blot out the sea on all sides. A fine misty rain would be falling continually and the inevitable wind sweeping in past the apparently impenetrable fog barrier".

The climate is characterized by constant strong west to northwesterly winds, frequent gales, a narrow temperature range, frequent low clouds and fog, high average humidity and more than 300 days a year with rain – characteristics that are comparable with those of other islands in the Southern Ocean around Antarctica. Heavy rainfalls are rare. Snow falls throughout the year, most often in spring. At sea level it usually lasts only a few hours, on the plateau it rarely lasts more than a few days.

The mean temperature is 4.8 C while the difference between the mean temperature of the warmest and coldest months is only 3.7 C. The extreme maximum and minimum recorded temperatures are 14.4 C and –8.9 C.

Tuesday 20th December

A day at sea, towards Campbell Island. Sea conditions not that good, with wind and sea from the NE, right on the nose. Speed was reduced as a result. Breakfast was at 0830. At 1030 Rodney and Shane led a Macquarie Island recap session – this session focused mainly on the social and political situation at Macquarie Island.

The "birders" made the most of the weather and sea conditions spending most of their time in the bridge rather than out on the deck. At 1200 Rodney asked for the second engine to be turned on to ensure that we arrived at Campbell Island on schedule at 0800 tomorrow morning. The extra engine increased our speed by about 3 knots but it did make the motion of the vessel just a little more violent. Not uncomfortable but not as comfortable as we were used to.

Lunch was served at 1330. The afternoon schedule was amended because of the weather. The sea-bird by-catch lecture which was scheduled for 1500 was postponed to allow those folk who were not feeling that well to stay in bed or remain out in the fresh air.

At 1630 Nathan gave an interesting presentation on Campbell Island. He discussed its discovery and the human history as well as its natural history. At the end of the presentation he gave an outline of what was scheduled for tomorrow at Campbell Island. Dinner was served at 1930. There was a good turn out and after dinner Vicky screened the video "The full Monty" and Tony read the "bird list".

HOPE

*The sealing ceiling breached
Yet hope it was not breached
For Penguins could be reached
Until they too were leeches*

*Macquarie exploitation
By human innovation
Was just like any nation
In times of exploration*

*So rabbits range on tussock land
Transported by unwitting hand
But now our ethics do demand
That history we countermand*

*And now with education
And cat eradication
Despite soil degradation
There is HOPE for conservation.*

Wednesday 21st December

Spirit of Enderby arrived in Perseverance Harbour shortly after 0730 and dropped anchor. There was a light wind from the NE and heavy fog enveloped the hills, but it was a mild 10 degrees outside. Breakfast was between 0700 and 0800 hours, then there was a briefing to outline the plans for the day. There were two options; a) a longer walk (all day) to NW Bay, a reasonable standard of fitness was required for this, and b) walk to Col Lyall Ridge.

After we had made our lunch two Naiads were put in the water and everybody was run ashore. The NW Bay walkers led by Rodney headed away first, then Vicky led the Col Lyall walkers up to the boardwalk. The weather improved a little bit as the day got older, cloud lifted and the sun even tried to come out, the NE wind dropped to about 5 knots. There was a fair amount of albatross activity even around midday but this did increase as the day got older. The bulbinella

was flowering really well, it was just past its best but there were still great shows of yellow all the way up the track and around the coastline. We were perhaps just a few days early for the best of the pleurophyllum. There was a good amount of flowering. The first of the flowers were on the Hookeri and Criniferum and smaller amounts on the speciosum. The Anisotome and Stilbocarpa were at their peak – beautiful.

Nathan went back down the track to run the shuttles for those that wanted to look for teal. He took several loads to Garden Cove with Phil and Steve. They searched the flat area behind the beach and up the creek and they were successful with 1 teal duckling seen. (It is good to know that they are breeding). The teal searching group returned to *Spirit of Enderby* after nearly being savaged to death by a sealion! (If you believe them).

The NW Bay walkers returned to Camp Cove where they were picked up by Nathan. They had a very successful day, just a small problem with one walker suffering from a “bi-polar” problem. Her long johns (tights) kept on falling down and she had to keep on pulling them up. Dr Hugh also had a close encounter with a young sealion. The last of the group arrived back in time for the last boat at 1900. Dinner was served at 1930 and the *Spirit of Enderby* sailed for Antipodes Islands at 2030. The sea conditions outside were good, light air and swell from NE.

CAMPBELL ISLAND HISTORY

Campbell Island was discovered in January, 1810 by Captain Frederick Hasselburg of the sealing brig, *Perseverance*. Hasselburg named the island after his employers, Robert Campbell and Co. of Sydney. On a later visit to the Island Captain Hasselburg, along with a woman called Elizabeth Farr and a young boy George Allwright, were drowned in Perseverance Harbour.

The Sir James Clark Ross expedition of 1840-42 called at Campbell Island. Two scientists accompanying Ross, J Hooker and D Lyall, compiled the first plant and animal inventories for Campbell Island.

A second expedition sponsored by the government of France to observe the transit of Venus arrived in 1874 and remained for three months. One member of this expedition, M Duris, died of typhoid fever on the island. He was buried on the point opposite Venus cove. An inscribed tombstone and iron cross were erected over the grave.

From 1868 to 1923, both British Navy and New Zealand government vessels made periodic visits to the island to service a castaway depot (at Depot Point, Perseverance Harbour), one of the several erected on subantarctic islands.

Sheep, goats and pigs had been liberated at various times prior to 1895 with the intention of providing sustenance to the shipwrecked, but none of these animals survived for very long. Fires had been started occasionally by accident or by design and rats had been reported as well established on the main island by 1874. Sheep were re-introduced in 1895 after the island (Pastoral Run No. 511) had been leased to J Gordon for a term of 21 years. The last of the shore whaling stations was located at North West Bay and operated from 1909 to 1916, in conjunction with management of the sheep run.

The farming era lasted until 1931 when unreliable transport, accidents and a world-wide recession finally made farming uneconomical. The farmers withdrew and left about 4000 sheep and between 20 to 30 cattle unattended on the island.

A wartime coast-watching station was established in 1941. When the coast-watching station was abandoned at the end of the war, meteorological activities continued at Tucker Cove. The station now occupies a new base at Beeman Cove, opened in November 1958. This base was decommissioned in late 1994. The old base is derelict. The sheep were removed over a 20 year period 1970 – 1990. The cattle were removed in the 1970's and once the sheep were gone what few cats remained died out naturally. The Rats were poisoned in a major operation in 2001. Today the flightless teal have been released back on the main island and snipe have recolonised the Island.

Thursday 22nd December.

Enjoyed a good run overnight. Day dawned rather overcast and grey with some fog. Breakfast served at 0830 then nothing scheduled until 1100 to allow everybody to get out and enjoy some “birding”. At 1100 there was a general Campbell Island recap. At the recap Nathan talked about the Col Lyall walkers experience and Rodney outlined what the NW Bay walkers had seen and done. Several folk took the opportunity to ask questions about aspects of the islands history and natural history.

Lunch was served at 1330 and again most of the afternoon was free for birding. The weather improved somewhat – the sun tried to come out, the wind dropped but the lazy NE swell continued slowing us down just a little bit. The highlight of the afternoon was 3 sperm whales. They were sighted some distance off the Port bow – we altered course. One of them sounded when we were some distance off, the second one sounded right beside the ship. Everybody had great views of it. The third one sounded before we got very close. (It is possible that there was a fourth one). The ships course was running parallel to a deep trench – this would probably account for the presence of the whales. There was an Antipodean wandering albatross around the vessel at the same time – it stayed with us for sometime and everybody had good views of it.

At 1700 Rodney gave an illustrated lecture on “Seabird By-Catch”. The lecture prepared by a Seabird group from around the world focused in on the problem of seabird by-catch with tooth fishing boats – but the problem is not limited to just tooth fishing boats but to all longline fishing boats. The figures and graphs presented in the lecture paint a very grim outlook for some species of albatross (and other seabirds including white chinned petrels) unless something is done – soon.

Dinner was served at 1930 and after dinner the film “Whale Rider” was screened in the lecture room.

*Snowy God
Mascara –rimmed
Inscrutable
Reflective inkwell pools
Of life undimmed
Unknowable
The eyes of one who rules

Presiding here
A world apart
Of Tussocks rarely trod
In air so clear
Where human heart
Can meet with Snowy God.*

Friday 23rd December

Spirit of Enderby made up some time overnight, the NE swell dropped out and it was comfortable traveling. It was still heavily overcast with areas of low cloud and fog. Breakfast was at 0830, and at 1030 we had an Antipodes/Bounties briefing. Rodney showed a couple maps and gave us a little bit of background on the history of the islands before explaining what was planned for us. Everything depended on the weather. We had an ETA at Ringdove Bay at 1415. As we approached the island we entered a heavy fog bank and were unable to see the island.

The conditions were OK. The fog lifted for a short time and you could make out the island, but the upper part remained shrouded in fog. On the cruise we enjoyed good views of the erect crested and rockhopper penguins. We also saw the NZ fur seal and southern elephant seal. Parakeets were obviously on everyones mind. The first one seen was redcrowned but then we got lucky and found a pair of Antipodes, which obligingly waited around for everyone to see. When it was change over time the Naiads headed out into the heavy fog and waited for the *Spirit of Enderby* to sound its fog horn.

The Birds of the Antipodes.

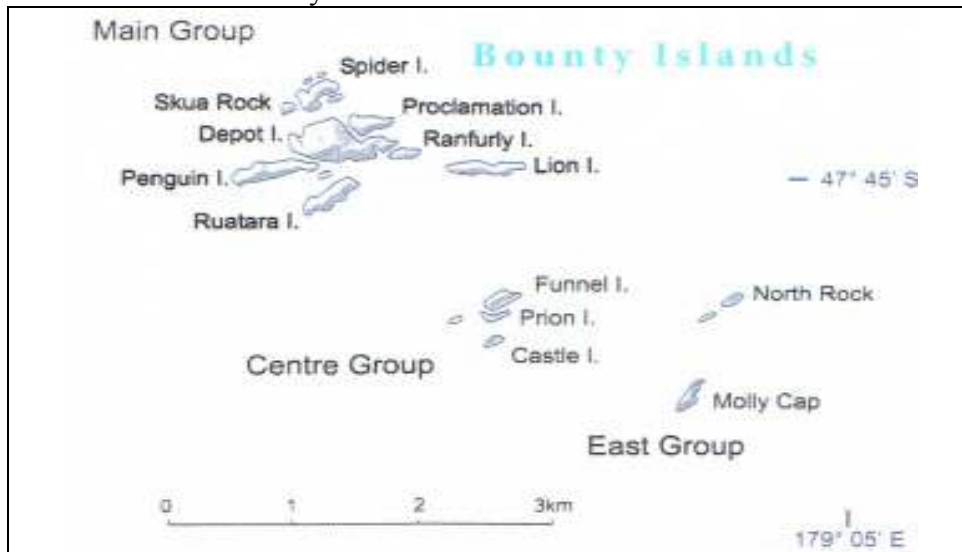
The Antipodes group are free of all introduced mammals except for the house mouse. The islands are the world's main breeding ground for the endemic Antipodes wandering albatross *Diomedea [exulans] antipodensis*, with an estimated 5000 breeding pairs. Other albatrosses breeding are the black-browed and white-capped mollymawks and the light mantled sooty albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata* which breeds mainly around the coastal cliffs of the main island, with an estimated population of ca. 1000 pairs.

Grey petrel *Procellaria cinerea* is a winter breeder (adults chiefly return to colonies in February and most fledging is in November) and breeds throughout the group in various sized colonies. Other tubenoses breeding on the group are the Northern giant petrel, the cape, white-chinned, soft-plumage and white-headed petrels, as well as the fairy prion and little shearwater. Black-bellied storm petrel and the common diving petrel also breed in moderate numbers whilst relatively small breeding populations of sooty shearwater, grey-backed storms petrel and Antarctic prion are found chiefly on offshore Islands. The endemic erect crested penguin *Eudyptes sclateri* breeds here in mixed colonies with the rockhopper penguin. The Antipodes Islands are also the breeding ground for one of the world's rarest parakeet, the Antipodes Island parakeet. The islands also have endemic races of the red-crowned parakeet and the NZ (Antipodes Island) snipe, which breeds throughout the entire group. There are several breeders that can only be found in small numbers, such as the Southern skua, Southern black-backed and red-bill gulls, Antarctic tern and the New Zealand pipit. Only few species of the self introduced breeders, including the mallard, hedge sparrow, song thrush, redpoll, starling are known to occur.

The change over went smoothly. Group A headed into shore on a compass bearing as the fog was very heavy. They also had good views of both penguin species. They located a different Antipodes parakeet that also hung around long enough for everybody to see. After watching some NZ fur seals, elephant seals and a couple of red crowned parakeets they headed out into the fog to await the arrival of the *Spirit of Enderby*. With everyone on board and the Naiads lifted on we departed for the Bounty Islands. The planned "chumming" was delayed until tomorrow because of the heavy fog. We cruised out of the fog a few miles north of the Antipodes, but the sky was still grey and overcast.

Saturday 24th December.

A pleasant overnight run from the Antipodes Island. Fears that the Bounty Islands might have been shrouded in fog were allayed when we woke. Apart from the rain, the conditions were near perfect. Group A went first. They were out for 1 ½ hours with great views of the erect crested, the salvins albatross and the Bounty Island shag. It was still raining when Group B headed out. They followed a similar course weaving their way around the many islands and rocks. The fur seal was at the peak of the breeding season and there were many young pups on the rocks. Rodney had mentioned that he was concerned that with the big growth in fur seal numbers, as they might be impacting or taking over what had been erect crested or salvin albatross breeding ground. It is easy to understand this concern when you see the numbers of animals there.



As we departed for the Chathams Nathan did some chumming (postponed from yesterday so was really smelly). Huge numbers of Salvins albatross came in and around the vessel. Once the chumming was finished, the *Spirit of Enderby* set a course for the Chatham Islands. It was a quiet afternoon with most people opting to be outside. The video on the black robin was screened during the afternoon.

The bar opened at 1800 and after dinner Steve held a lecture entitled “Birding 101” – an introduction to Sea birding, which many folk took advantage of.

How Long
Iron-filming vortices
Swarming, wheeling, sailing
Drawn ever upward
By the Sky Magnet
From a braying, shrieking
Guano-granite cacophony
Fringed by burnished gold
Manes of angel hair
All fed by rich, deep, cold
Unknown waters
But for how long?

Sunday 25th December

Merry Christmas! The majority of people were on the deck early this morning with high hopes of a magenta and Chatham Island petrels. It was in this region last year that Steve and others saw a magenta petrel. There was some good birding. But alas neither of the species was seen, although many others were. At 1030 Rodney gave a presentation on the Chatham Islands. He discussed the history of the islands from discovery to the present day. He talked about the European discovery in 1791, the arrival of the Maori people in 1835 and the impact on the indigenous people as well as the impact on the land and its wildlife.

By lunch time we had the Pyramid Rock in sight. The weather and sea conditions were improving all the time – seas were flattening off and the cloud was breaking up – the sun actually shone (for the first time in many days). Nathan got the vessel slowed down a little bit so we arrived immediately after lunch. The captain circled the island and we were all able to get good views. As we left to head to SE Island Nathan did some chumming. The birds were slow to come in and when they did there weren't that many of them. There was a good mixture of albatross species including Chatham, Pacific, and Northern royal.

CHATHAM ISLAND MOLLYMAWK *Thalassarche [cauta] eremita* The Pyramid Rock, situated some 8 kilometres south of Pitt Island is the only breeding ground of the Chatham Island mollymawk (first discovered in 1926) which nests there, even on the narrow ledges on the steep walls of the main cone. On these ledges, space is so restricted that the parent birds have scarcely enough room to stand by the nest. The breeding population numbers approximately 2,500 pairs at the present time. It is possibly the most distinctive of the shy albatross complex *Thalassarche [cauta]*, and certainly the most colourful feature is its rich, chrome-yellow bill that is contrasted with the darkest grey head

Capt. brought *Spirit of Enderby* into Thornis Bay on S E Island and dropped anchor. We were close in – so close in fact that people could see both shore plover and the oystercatcher from the top deck. As soon as the anchor was down (the crew started fishing) the Naiads were launched. Group B headed away at 1600 cruising close inshore for good views of the Pitt Island shag, the shore plover and the oystercatcher. Other birds we saw included the skua, tui, parakeet and Australian harriers. This group cruised for 1 hour before swapping over with Group A. They had an equally rewarding cruise seeing all the same species.

At 1800 when Group A arrived back Rodney took four of the ET's for a snorkel. Only one of them had a wet suit, but the others braved the elements. Shane took Nathan for a Dive, he was after some crayfish. Rodney is apparently very partial to it. Vicky had opened the Bar and there was a good turn out in anticipation of Christmas Dinner which was scheduled for 1930. It was a great dinner, really nicely presented. John and Sam had done a great job. We remained at anchor at SE Island overnight.

Christmas Dinner 2005

Entrée

*Tomato and roast red pepper soup topped with fresh chives,
feathered cream and Parmesan flute*

Tempter

*A taste from the waters around; hot smoked salmon, pickled mussels
and garlic brandy prawns*

From the Buffet

*Prime Southland roast Rib eye encrusted in Mustard, Ginger and rock salt
served with
a rich Pinot Noir jus*

*Roast turkey flavoured with fresh rosemary and thyme served with cranberry
and red currant sauce*

*A selection of your favourite salads, all served with dressings to match:
fresh lettuce salad, Mediterranean salad, potato salad*

*A selection of fresh steamed vegetables incorporating carrots, cauliflower,
fresh beans and asparagus served in a pickled ginger glaze*

New season Jersey Benne potatoes

Vegetarian

Chargrilled vegetable Vol-au-vent

Dessert

*Freshly baked Christmas puddings served with a Vanilla anglaise
and mascarpone cheese*

Petit fours

*A cluster of Christmas treats to tempt your taste buds as you sit enjoying your
2005 Christmas dinner aboard Spirit of Enderby*

Monday 26th December.

It was obvious that some folk had celebrated way too long, like the ET who was found asleep in the bar at 0600! Engines were started at 0615 and we left the anchorage at SE Island at 0630. It was still calm and it appeared that the sun might even shine for another day. Breakfast was served at 0730 as we were underway to Star Keys (or Round Island). We cruised as close as possible to this island, but it is protected by a reef on the eastern side. Good numbers of Pacific albatross followed the ship. From Star Keys we cruised out to the 44's (so named because they sit almost right on top of the 44 parallel) and cruised around the eastern side of the island (so the sun was behind us.) Had good views of the Northern royal albatross and the Pacific albatross, which both nest on the summit of the island. There was a natural archway through the island and there was a temptation to go Naiad cruising – as the weather and sea conditions were so good, but in the end had to be satisfied with the views from the ship.



We departed the 44's for Matarakau on the main Chatham Islands - about a 2 hour run. Our route took us past the small fishing village of Kaingaroa. This was originally called Skirmish Bay – it was here that Broughtons men made first contact with the Moriori people. We dropped anchor at 1300, just as lunch was announced. Rodney, Nathan and Shane put a Naiad over the side to check out the shag situation. Rodney reported that we should be able to see both Pitt Island and Chatham shags here. Nathan came back on board and reported that yes both species were present but because of the rising wind and sea it was not going to be possible to land, but they would offer Naiad cruises for anybody who wanted to go. It was very bouncy alongside the gangway and even bouncy going to and from the ship but once inshore there was a small amount of shelter. The Chatham Island shags had well developed chicks but the Pitt Island shags appeared to have finished for the season. There was also a group of white fronted terns sitting on the rocks. The Russian crew took the opportunity to do some more fishing and that of course brought the Pacific albatross around. Once everybody was back on board, *Spirit of Enderby* got underway for Waitangi. Nathan gave a brief “briefing” on tomorrow's planned activities on the Chatham Islands. Dinner was served at 1930. We were rolling a little bit with the beam sea that was running, but that improved with a course change at 1954. We anchored at Waitangi at 2100 hours, ready for an early start tomorrow.

Tuesday 27th December

Woke to the ship rolling quite badly, as there was a 3 meter swell wrapping around the headland. Capt. moved the ship a little closer under the lee of the land and it flattened out a little bit. Breakfast was at 0630 (we had to remember that Chatham Islands are 45 mins ahead of New Zealand). After breakfast at 0730 two Naiads (Rodney and Shane driving) started to ferry us ashore. It was a dry landing onto the wharf. We waited ashore until everybody was ashore and the two Naiads were anchored out on a mooring before joining the local transport for the ride down to the Tuku. There were 2 (school) buses and 1 landrover. The long (Tuku) walkers were in the one bus and the landrover, while the short (Awatotara) walkers were in the other bus.

We headed off out of town following the road to the south coast. It was a gravel road that wound through farm land. A couple of the hills tested the driving skills of the drivers (Terry and Donna Tuanui) but eventually we stopped at the Awatotara valley – the buses could go no further (road was too steep). The long walkers headed away as they still had a couple miles to walk before starting their bush walk. The landrover was used to ferry them to the start of the track. The short walkers wandered down the hillside into a bush/scrubland area beside the Awatotara River. The target species were the pigeon and the greywarbler. Some folk got onto the warbler pretty quickly, others missed it but persistence paid off and eventually all those that wanted to saw it. A pigeon flew across the valley and landed in a tree for everybody to see.

CHATHAM ISLAND PIGEON *Hemiphaga [novaeseelandiae] chathamensis* The distinct looking Chatham Island pigeon, and which sooner or later will receive a specific taxonomic rank, has declined to very low numbers and is no longer present in the northern sections of the main island. Now rare, it is found only in the extreme south of the main island and on Pitt Island where, in both places, the remnants of bush which support it are degenerating. This beautiful bird is one of the world's spectacular pigeons. Recent trapping programs in the Tuku Reserve have meant that this bird has been successfully breeding and numbers are building.

With the want list satisfied we walked back up the hill towards the coach. As we were walking up a pigeon was spotted in a tree only a few meters away from edge of the road. Several good photos were taken before it flew out and landed on the road. As we were getting ready to board the coach, Liz, the wife of the landowner, brought a warblers nest (and egg) for us to have a closer look at.

Donna drove us back to town where we disembarked the coach and wandered down to the pub (hotel) for some refreshments. The long walkers joined us about 40mins later. They had had an equally successful morning with good sightings of both the warbler and the pigeon.

Naiads started running shuttles back to the ship at 1400. The sea and swell had dropped out a lot from this morning and our last embarkation from the Naiads was very pleasant. With everybody on board by 1445 *Spirit of Enderby* began the final leg of its journey to

Dunedin. We all enjoyed a late lunch. There was a little bit of sea/swell outside the lee of the bay but it was improving all the time and it was not unpleasant. Blue sky made it very pleasant (and warm) on the decks and we made good time. The birding was exceptional, with an estimated 500+ albatross' of various species circling around the vessel. Dinner was served at 2030 (we only had lunch at 1500 hrs).

New Light
In heaving swell
And white-cap spray
We pass into the night
Where dreams propel
Our minds to play
Ere dawn will bring new light.

Wednesday 28th December

A day at sea, a day to reflect on the experience, a day to spend sea watching. Breakfast was available from 0830 onwards this morning. Sea conditions were great, a swell and breeze of about 20kts from the SW. *Spirit of Enderby* was making good time towards Dunedin. The weather was overcast and grey but it improved around midday to clear blue skies and warm.

The highlight of the morning had to be an encounter with 9 sperm whales over a 30 min period. They were all moving from east to west and appeared unbothered by the ship. We passed very close to several of them, others were seen in the distance. There were some great views and hopefully some great photos. The Chatham Island recap was postponed for 30mins while we were in the presence of the whales.

Chatham Island recap was held at 1130 and it was well attended, with some very interesting questions and observations. Greg had a question about seabirds and lights – had anything been done to reduce the incidence of them landing on ships at night, and what about cities and towns near the coast? We also discussed some of the cultural hurdles to a successful conservation strategy, especially in relation to an island community like the Chatham Islands where a large percentage of the island is privately owned. (In the case of the Chathams over 90%).

Lunch was served at 1300 hours. After lunch we all assembled in the Bar/library for a presentation by the ET scholarship winners. They had to speak for 5mins on what motivated them to apply for the scholarship and what they were taking away from the experience. It was very interesting to listen to them, the reasons they applied were very varied but there was a common thread as to that they were taking home “a greater appreciation of the islands and the Southern Ocean ecosystem” While this presentation was on Billy photographed a Canada goose at 44° 37' S, 178° 35 E a position which is 240nm away from any land in NZ.

The remainder of the afternoon was free. Folk took the opportunity to be on the bridge or outside. The bar opened at 1800 hours. Just as Vicky announced dinner, smoke was seen pouring out of engine room, the fire alarm went off and the crew went into action. Nathan asked everybody to move immediately to the Port side dining room. Rodney took a roll call to make sure everybody was present. Then it was a matter of waiting to establish the extent of the fire. The main engines were shut down and the emergency generator came on. The crew put on breathing apparatus and went into the engine room. It was discovered that there was a small electrical fire and it was quickly put out, but it took a long time for the smoke to dissipate. We were eventually allowed to take our seats in the starboard side dining room and John and Sam served the entrée. The main generator was started again and we were back on full power. The remainder of the meal was served, the main engine was started again and we continued on our way to Dunedin, having lost about two hours. We were fortunate that sea conditions were calm and that the crew were well trained and were able to quickly contain the fire.

Thursday 29th December.

Near perfect sea and weather conditions this morning. There was a light air of northerly wind and half a meter of SW swell. Blue sky and warm sunshine. Breakfast was available at 0830 then the remainder of the morning was free to enjoy, relax and start packing because tomorrow we will be back in Port. Lunch was served at 1300 hours and then Vicky and Shane were in the bar to settle accounts. At 1600 hours we all assembled in the lecture room for an expedition recap. Nathan had a map of the Sub Antarctic Islands with our route marked on it (it all makes sense now). Then he had a power point presentation of a selection of photos from the trip to remind us of some of the highlights of the expedition. He thanked his team for their help and assistance and then told us what was scheduled for tomorrow and how the buses would transport us to the hotels and airport. Leah shared a lovely poem she had written about our voyage with everyone. The final dinner was served at 1930 after which Tony read the last “bird list” of the trip.

Miracle of Dawn

*The morning sun
Bleeds burning gold
On surging, white-capped seas
Our Northward run
Through worlds untold
The Spirit takes with ease.*

*Clouds pillowing
And shredding blue
They mark our Christmas morn
Thoughts billowing
And born anew
This miracle of dawn.*

Observations on Birders of the Southern Ocean

Southern Ocean 2005-12-25
Researched by Sophie Harris

While travelling to the Sub Antarctic Islands I have been fortunate to witness many keen birders, several of whom are outstanding in their field.

My observations are as follows.

At sunrise the dominant birders emerge on deck and find a prime location for excellent viewing potential. The dominant birders will remain on deck all day only returning to their burrows to feed and preen.

Prior to the season the dominant birders have stored great reserves of education, qualification and travel and also have many previous seasons of experience.

On deck the emergent birders surround the dominant birders and jostle for position. Fighting between the birders are tactical manoeuvres of superiority and one-up-man-ship, exemplified by exceedingly long stints on deck to amass ticks.

As the sun sets the winner has the highest bird count and has the best eye for identifying rare migrant species at a great distance. This is perhaps testament to their superior genes for eyesight and photographic memory for recalling plumage pattern.

New season birders congregate at the outer margin of the activity. Young birders listen intently to the older birders of the flock. During the nursery stage at a safe sight at the stern, a caring auntie will show the best viewing and identification tactics. Mimicking is common and the Christmas chicks will start by using binoculars to identify the more common species at 8 O'clock, before running the gauntlet of identification at the bridge.

At the end of the season the young birders spend several years at land. If they are not caught in the long line of sustainable income they may well return to the Southern Ocean as fully-fledged ornithologists.

*The time has come for our farewell
I hope you won't be sad
For this journey has been a huge success
To have shared it with you I'm glad*

*The Southern Ocean has treated us well
The roaring forties seemed barely there
And furious fifties, what a joke
Our rock and roll days were rare*

*My thanks I give on behalf of you all
To the Heritage Expeditions team
They've led us to amazing and beautiful lands
To destinations of our dreams*

*Nathan, our leader and everyone's friend
How wise you've become, so young
Your experience and knowledge bewilders us all
Praises to you should be sung*

*Rodney the Grand Master you are
Your islands you have shared
And taught us, what seems, an infinite amount
Of wisdom, knowledge and care*

*Our Cruise Director made sure we were safe
On the gangway we meet Vicky
And she's taught us all a phrase or two
Of the crew's language, although quite tricky*

*Shane wears shorts as short can be
His legs he proudly shows
He loves to hoon on the Naiads at sea
Wonder if Rodney's aware of the speed he goes*

*Tony's our resident birder extraordinaire
You spot species from miles afar
And you've assisted all over, from walks and landings
To your spot behind the bar*

*Dr Hugh, the miracle man
You've kept us from any ills
And beat the youngens on the walks
Running with your pack up hills*

*John made sure our hunger was curbed
Your food we loved you can be sure
And it will be plainly evident to see
You may have to roll us out the door*

*Sam let us into his beat-box world
In between shifts in the galley
And slippers he's worn for 18 days straight
For good traction, but I bet they're smelly*

*The Russian crew have crept about
Keeping us fed and safe and clean
To them I propose a toast of thanks
Professor Khromov runs like a well-oiled machine*

*The scholarship team made themselves at home
Laughing loud and staying up late
I hope we didn't run amok too much
Grown up company we appreciate*

*Birders I've come to love and adore
As they look over the bow
Some key points of identification I've learned
The whats and whens and hows*

*So we are all here for a reason of our own
No two are the same
But we now have a bond named Enderby
In our hearts it will remain*

*So part with smiles as we disembark
Take memories we have made
Of friendships, birds in flight and whales,
Mine will never fade*

*So thanks from me to all of you
For adventure, the seas, the jokes
But it's time for me to say farewell
And for the record, "Rightio Folks".*

Leah World