

Birding Down Under
10 to 27 November '08
Expedition Log - Voyage # 2560



Heritage Expeditions

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Day 1 - Monday 10-11-2008

Depart Bluff

We arrived at the Spirit of Enderby at around 1030 after an interesting visit to the Invercargill Museum. We were shown to our rooms soon after arrival and spent the next hour or so exploring the ship that was to be our home for the next 18 days.

After everybody cleared customs the ship pulled away from the Bluff wharf around 12:15. Most people stayed up on top of the bridge deck as we left Bluff Harbour but as we came into Foveaux Strait many people made their way to the bow for some great birding. Lunch was served at 13:30 and soon after Nathan - our Expedition Leader - introduced the staff, gave everybody an introduction to ship board life and went through the theoretical part of the lifeboat drill. The practical part of the lifeboat drill was held soon after whilst we were still in the shelter of Stewart Island and everybody climbed aboard the lifeboats to see what it would be like in the unlikely event that we ever needed to use them.

The next item on the afternoon agenda was another briefing by Nathan, this time on the zodiacs and ways to embark and disembark them safely. He followed this up with an informative presentation on the Snares, and everybody left with their appetites suitably whetted for the following day's activities.

The day was successful for the birders, with several species of albatross, smaller petrel and prion seen during the afternoon and early evening. After dinner the swell picked up a little and most people called it an early night in anticipation of an early start the following day at the Snares.

Day 2 - Tuesday 11-11-2008

The Snares

We awoke to grey skies and low mist, with the islands that make up the Snares just visible in the distance. Nathan asked the Captain to approach closer and see if it would be possible to launch the zodiacs and undertake the cruise as planned.

As the Spirit of Enderby came into position the conditions were looking marginal and made even worse by the strong current that was taking the ship in the wrong direction. The Captain put the ship into a holding pattern while we had breakfast and we waited with nervous anticipation to see if the conditions would improve. Fortunately by 8:30 the current had diminished with the changing tide and the first zodiac was put in the water around 9:00.



Most people made it onto the zodiacs for the morning cruise and by the time the first group made it to the coast the skies were beginning to clear and blue sky was becoming apparent. The day only got better as the morning went on and both groups managed to get fine weather for the cruises. We cruised around the coast with Nathan and Aleks driving the first group and Adam and Aleks the second. Everybody got good views of the Snares Tomtit and the Snares Fernbird, high on the must-see list of many birders. The Snares Crested Penguins were in abundance, and some great photographs were taken of this endemic species. Other birds seen during the morning included Antarctic Terns, Welcome Swallows and Song Thrush.

After the second group had completed their cruise and the zodiacs were back on board the anchor was lifted and we were on our way again, this time en-route to the Auckland Islands. There was a diverse and abundant range of birdlife in the productive waters that we were traversing, high numbers of Fairy and Broad-billed Prions were observed and even the occasional Antarctic Prion was seen. Albatrosses were also regularly observed, including Salvin's, White-capped, Campbell, Black-browed, Antipodean and Gibson's Wandering.

The sea conditions were pretty good for this leg of the journey and most people managed to make it to Nathan's introductory presentation on the Auckland Islands. Following this was pre-dinner drinks where Nathan and Aleks conducted a re-cap of the morning's activities at the Snares and Adam and Steve went through the bird list for the day. Dinner was another scrumptious affair and most people retired for the evening soon after.



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Day 3 - Wednesday 12-11-2008

Enderby Island

After arriving at Enderby Island in the early hours of the morning, the Captain anchored the Spirit of Enderby on the sheltered eastern side and we awoke to another grey day. Nevertheless the conditions were good for landing and after breakfast and lunch-making most people made their way ashore in the zodiacs.

During the walk across the islands we were treated to some close encounters with some courting Southern Royal Albatrosses and the beautiful site of the bulbinella flowers starting to appear. At the end of the boardwalk Adam took a group on a short and successful walk to look for the Auckland Islands Snipe and following this the group separated into those doing the long walk, and those making the leisurely return journey to Sandy Bay. The western side was wild with strong winds and rough seas giving people the real feeling of a true subantarctic day, nevertheless around half the group chose to do the long walk and although it was a little wet, most found it an extremely rewarding experience.



Most people saw the birds that they were looking for during the day, the Campbell Island Teal were abundant, and a pair was even present at the zodiac landing site for most of the day. The Auckland Island Tomtit, Bell Bird, Banded Dotterel and Pipit were also commonly observed as were the Red-crowned Parakeet, although many were looking a little bedraggled as the day wore on due to the fine drizzle that fell throughout the morning. The Yellow-eyed Penguins were also observed in several places around the island, one conveniently perched on a branch behind the research station for most of the day. The Hooker's Sea lions were also present in reasonable numbers with many of the adult males starting to stake out their patch for the harems that will form over the next month or so.

Everybody was back on board the Spirit of Enderby by 18:00 and pre-dinner drinks was a lively affair with everybody animatedly discussing their day's activities. We stayed at anchor for another delicious dinner prepared by our chefs Sean and Ben and at around 23:00 we left the anchorage and made our way down the east coast of the island to Carnley Harbour.

Day 4 - Thursday 13-11-08

Carnley Harbour

Dawn found us moving slowly down into the western most point of Carnley Harbour in order to assess the conditions for making a landing there. However the wind was too strong for the ship to anchor safely and the swell was too big to land, so we made our way back to Coleridge Bay where we dropped anchor and put all four zodiacs in the water for a zodiac cruise of Musgrave Harbour and the Northern Arm of Carnley Harbour.



We were able to get good views of the southern rata forest and rolling hills that make up the southern half of the main Auckland Island and Adams Island. Our guides showed us several historical sites, and provided us with some great historical background to the area. At the end of the Northern Arm was the clearing where the crew of the German warship Erlagen felled over 200 tonne of rata to fuel the ships boilers at the start of the Second World War, allowing her to make the successful journey to South America. This event led to the establishment of the coast-watching huts and we learnt about the men and exploits of these 'Cape Expeditioners'.

We returned to the Spirit of Enderby just before lunch and stayed at anchor so we could eat in the sheltered waters of Carnley Harbour. As we finished eating the ship started to leave the harbour and as we pulled out of the heads were treated to a spectacular southern ocean day, with wild winds whipping the tops of the swells in bright sunshine. The birds were enjoying the conditions as well and the Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses were particularly impressive as they flew around the ship. Other birds observed included the Gibson's Wandering Albatross, White-capped Albatross, White-headed Petrels, Black-bellied Storm Petrels and, of course, the ubiquitous Cape Petrels.



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As the dramatic coastline of Adams Island slowly receded into the distance most people were finally forced off the bow by the swell and spray and took shelter in the bridge to continue birding or just enjoying the view. A few people took the opportunity to take it easy and catch up on some rest while others continued to brave the elements and see what they could see. Most came to the pre-dinner drinks and reading of the bird list with dinner following soon after.

Day 5 - Friday 14/11/08

At sea en-route to Macquarie Island

A grey Southern Ocean day greeted us on awakening. Some took the advantage of a later breakfast to have a sleep in while the keen birders were up as usual at first light to catch the early morning birds.

Highlights of the days birding included several Kerguelen Petrels, mostly observed in the morning, and also the occasional Soft Plumage Petrel put in an appearance. Other birds sighted included White-headed Petrels, several species of albatross and the ubiquitous Antarctic Prion.

In the late afternoon, Aleks gave a presentation on Macquarie Island, whetting our appetites with some interesting information and beautiful images. Just as pre-dinner drinks began the wind turned westerly and the sun came out for the first time. The light continued to be stunning for the rest of the evening with beautiful light illuminating the albatrosses as they circled the boat until finally the sun dipped below the horizon.



Day 6 - Saturday 15-11-08

Macquarie Island

We awoke to the snow capped peaks of Macquarie Island off our starboard side and a fresh north westerly wind blowing. Conditions were ok for landing however and after breakfast Nathan gave us a briefing on the plans for the day and what we could expect on Macquarie Island. The first zodiac went ashore at around 9:30 and most people were ashore by 10:00. As we were all making our way ashore the sun came out and what followed was a truly memorable morning on Macquarie Island.



There were hundreds of Southern Elephant Seal weaners on the beach waiting to greet us, with a few of the old beachmaster males still hanging around. There were King and Gentoo Penguins also on the beach where we landed and the Kings in particular were very inquisitive about the new arrivals. After shedding our life jackets we divided up into groups and went for a walk around the Isthmus, firstly checking out the digesters where thousands of penguins met their death, a legacy of the human exploitation that occurred on the island in the 1800s. We then made our way over to the west coast where we were greeted by a myriad of wildlife, almost tropical blue skies and wild Southern Ocean seas. It truly was a remarkable morning and the residents of the island informed us that it was the best weather that they had for two months.

Most people also visited the main station where the Macquarie Island chef had prepared a delicious morning tea, with plenty of scones with jam and cream to go around. Reluctantly people made their way back to the zodiacs and on the way out to the ship our drivers took us past a small Rockhopper Penguin colony. The ship left the anchorage once the last zodiac was aboard and whilst we were having lunch the Captain took us down to Sandy Bay.

With the sun still shining most people came ashore at Sandy Bay. There was an abundant and diverse range of wildlife present including the endemic Royal Penguin, Elephant seals, Giant Petrels, Subantarctic Skuas and a King Penguin colony with thousands of adults and chicks. The King Penguin chicks created a cacophony of noise with their calls echoing around the bay, and their brown down coats were in stark contrast to the adults that were also milling around in the chaos that is a King Penguin colony.



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The clouds slowly started to appear later in the afternoon and the first of the zodiacs started to shuttle people back to the ship. The last people were brought aboard around 19:00, just in time to catch the reading of the bird list. It was another successful day for the birders with the endemic shag and, of course the Royal Penguin being amongst the highlights. Dinner was another lively affair with everybody keen to share their experiences from what had turned out to be a magical day on Macquarie Island.

Day 7 - Sunday 16-11-08

Macquarie Island – en route to Campbell Island

The howling wind and driving snow that greeted the early risers today was a typical reminder that we were in the midst of the subantarctic. After steaming up past Sandy Bay the ship made its way into the slightly more sheltered Buckles Bay so Nathan and Aleks could drop the Macquarie Island rangers back ashore. Once that was successfully completed and the zodiacs were back on board, we again headed south, this time down to the King Penguin colony at Lusitania Bay.

As we approached the coastline the black, white and brown specks started to resolve themselves into penguin adults and chicks and we realised the magnitude of what we were seeing. Every now and again the wind blew a whiff of the strong odour that was associated with so many penguins being in the one place and the digesters could just be made out, a stark reminder of just how close this species was to being wiped out on Macquarie Island. As we marvelled at the penguin colony, the sun came out, lighting up the snow covered peaks of the south-east coast of the island, with the breakers curling around Hurd Point visible in the distance.

In the late morning we reluctantly turned around and left the coastline of Macquarie Island, heading north-east for Campbell Island. The westerly wind and swell made for a relatively comfortable motion and we were treated to two presentations during the afternoon, the first by Steve on Seabirds of the Southern Ocean and the second from Adam on Mammals of the Southern Ocean. Both presentations provided us with a wealth of information and were beautifully illustrated with images of the birds and animals that we see in this part of the world.

It was also a fantastic day for birding with the bow providing an ideal sheltered environment and many took advantage of this to spend time up the front, taking images or just checking out the abundant and diverse range of tubenoses that were present. As we started to get into deeper waters the diversity of species slowly started to drop off, but there were still numerous seabirds around to keep the birders and photographers interested well into the early evening when most called it a day and went in for pre-dinner drinks.

Day 8 - Monday 17-11-08

At sea en-route to Campbell Island

The swell and wind had dropped a little overnight and most awoke well-rested and ready to face another day in the Southern Ocean. After breakfast the morning's activities included the opening of the sea-shop for those wishing to indulge in a little retail therapy and later in the morning a showing of the classic subantarctic documentary 'Beyond the Roaring Forties'. Lunch was a buffet taco extravaganza, and everybody took full advantage, with many going back for seconds or even thirds.

The birding continued to be good throughout the day and in the relatively calm conditions, many took the opportunity to spend most of the day outside. In the mid-afternoon Aleks gave us a great presentation on the albatrosses that breed on Macquarie Island and some insight into some of the research that he has been involved with over the last twelve years. Just before pre-dinner drinks Nathan gave us a briefing on what to expect on Campbell Island and outlined the likely plans for the day's activities. Everybody went to pre-dinner drinks eagerly anticipating the following day on Campbell Island.



Day 9 - Tuesday 18-11-08

Campbell Island

A true subantarctic day greeted us in Perseverance Harbour, Campbell Island when we awoke for an early breakfast, with snow on the decks and covering the tops of the visible peaks. It was accompanied by an icy wind but there was blue sky amongst the scudding clouds and it looked like it was going to be a great day on Campbell Island.

After breakfast, and lunch making the small group that was making the North-west Bay walk departed the Spirit of Enderby with Aleks as guide.



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Soon after, the rest of the group were shuttled ashore by Adam and Nathan and slowly made their way up to the Col Lyall saddle. It truly was four seasons in one day with sunshine mixed in with intermittent hail and snow. Everybody got to have a great look at the Southern Royal Albatrosses which were in the early stages of the breeding season, courting and establishing nest bonds, finding nest sites and nest building. Many were content just to sit and watch the albatrosses, while others ventured a bit further afield, up to the west coast cliffs to get great views of the west coast of the island. The megaherbs were a real highlight for many people and many were just starting to flower, with the *Bulbinella rossi*, *Anisotome latifolia* and occasional *Pleurophyllum speciosum* flowers providing bright colour throughout the predominantly green landscape.

The North-west Bay walkers also had a great day. Starting off with a scramble through the *Dracophyllum* scrub and a climb up to a mid island ridge, the group then dropped down into Capstan Cove for lunch. Along the way the megaherbs again were a highlight for many and the head high tussocks as we dropped down into the bay proved a little challenging for some of the group. After a relaxing lunch in the bay we took some time to check out the wildlife that was there including Southern Elephant Seals, Hooker Sea lions and the occasional Yellow-eyed Penguin. The group then headed to the North-west Bay Hut for a look then continued on up the old fence post line towards Mt Dumas. Again there were plenty of Southern Royal Albatrosses to marvel at along the way and the views that we had of the west coast as we slowly reached higher ground were extremely rewarding.

After a zodiac cruise around Perseverance Harbour, most people were eventually dropped back aboard the ship and the last of the Col Lyall walkers were ferried back to the ship just before pre-dinner drinks. Nathan had organised an early dinner so we could depart the harbour and make our way up the coast to the grey-headed and black browed albatross colonies before dark and as we cruised up the coastline there were a myriad of seabirds around the ship. It was a great way to finish off our time on Campbell Island and as the sun slowly set we altered course and set sail for the Antipodes Islands.

Day 10 - 19/11/08 Wednesday

At sea en route to the Bounty Islands

Today was a day for the birders. Although it was overcast and a little grey at times, we spent the whole day heading east north east from Campbell Island and the seabirds were in abundance for most of the day. A group of early risers reported seeing 14 species of tub-nose before breakfast and that was just a taste of what was to come for the rest of the day. Albatrosses, *Pterodroma* petrels, shearwaters and prions were all in abundance and the prions in particular tested many identification skills with Broad-billed, Antarctic and Fairy/Fulmar forms present.

During the day there were a number of activities for those who needed a break from outside. The documentary - Battle for Campbell Island - was shown in the morning and provided a great run-down on the operation to eradicate rats from the island. At midday we had a recap of the activities of the previous few days, focusing on our time at Campbell Island and many memorable experiences were shared. After lunch the classic wildlife documentary - Mystery of the Ocean Wanderers - was screened and was thoroughly enjoyed by those present. Just before pre-dinner drinks, Steve gave the second part of his Seabirds of the Southern Ocean presentation and followed it up with some fantastic shots of flying fish that he had taken whilst aboard the Spirit of Enderby on the West Pacific Odyssey earlier in the year. Pre-dinner drinks was followed by yet another delicious meal cooked by our chefs, Sean and Ben, followed by a popular movie for those who weren't quite ready for bed.

Day 11 - Thursday 20/11/08

Antipodes Island

We made great time overnight and at first light were within a few hours of the Antipodes Islands. Bright sunshine was interspersed with south-westerly squalls throughout the morning and there were a multitude of seabirds present to keep everybody occupied on deck. The islands came into sight in mid-morning and soon after, Nathan gave us an interesting and informative presentation on the Antipodes and Bounty Islands, making sure that we knew a bit about what was coming up over the next few days. After the briefing almost everybody was out on decks as we sailed up past Ringdove Cove and into Anchorage Bay. There was a reasonably strong south-westerly wind blowing but conditions were ok and Nathan decided to bring lunch forward to try and take advantage of the weather window.



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Immediately after lunch the zodiacs were put into the water and by 14:00 everybody was aboard and we were making our way south down the coast of the main Antipodes Islands. It was a beautiful afternoon under the sometimes foreboding black basalt cliffs of the island, with Erect-crested Penguins in abundance, and Fairy Prions flitting about the boats and shoreline. We were fortunate enough to see both the Antipodes and Reischeks (Red-crowned) Parakeets during the cruise, perched in amongst the tussock or flying around the coastal slopes. After a couple of hours of idyllic cruising we slowly made our way back to the vessel and soon after the captain lifted the anchor and we were on our way once again, this time en-route to the Bounty Islands.



Day 12 - Friday 21/11/08

Bounty Islands

We awoke to the sight of the Bounty Islands, glowing orange in the early morning dawn light and even at that hour the thousands of birds that call this island home could be observed flying above the islands that make up the group. After coming in as close as possible to the north-eastern quarter of the main group, Nathan and the Captain decided that it would be possible to launch the zodiacs and after standing off and drifting during breakfast, the Captain slowly took us back closer into shore and they boats were put in the water. Everybody who was coming was aboard by 7:30 and for the next 2 hours we were fortunate enough to experience the Bounty Islands at their best. The wind wasn't too strong and the wind on the leeward sides of the islands that we cruised past wasn't too strong. The light was beautiful and the sights, sounds and smells coming off the islands threatened to overwhelm the senses.

There were Salvin's Albatross by the thousands, calling and wheeling overhead, Fulmar Prions slitting around and scrambling around the rock faces, New Zealand Fur Seal males holding territories and young pups, just about ready to wean by the hundreds scattered around the coastline. The Erect-crested Penguins were also present in abundance, often in amongst the albatrosses causing many people to ask how on earth they had managed to clamber up to the often sheer rocky slopes to get there. Those in Aleks' boat helped to count the Bounty Island shags that were present on the islands in good numbers. As so few people visit these islands, Heritage Expedition often help out with much needed scientific research, like collecting samples or conducting censuses.

After everybody was back aboard, Adam, Aleks, Nathan and Bo headed back out in a single boat to complete the shag census and make a brief landing. Once that was completed the final boat was brought aboard and once everything was lashed down and stowed away we headed north for the Chatham Islands.

The afternoon was nearly perfect with light winds and a little swell making for a very comfortable motion. High numbers of Fulmar Prions and Salvin's Albatross accompanied us for much of the afternoon and many people took advantage of the near calm conditions to take some great images of these beautiful birds. Other birds observed during the afternoon included all three forms of the Wandering Albatross, Southern Royal Albatrosses, Black-winged Petrels, Mottled Petrels, Soft-plumaged Petrels and White-chinned Petrels.

Day 13 Saturday 22/11/08

At sea and the Pyramid.

Many people got up early in order to give themselves the best chance of spotting the rare Magenta Petrels also known as the Chatham Island Taiko. With a strong nor-westerly blowing and choppy sea the bow wasn't the greatest place for birding and many took to the stern to try their luck. Around 9:00 a Magenta petrel was spotted and over the next ½ hour another two sightings, probably of the same bird were made. It was a great birding achievement as there only thought to be around 150 individuals in the entire world populations, making it one of the rarest petrels on the planet.

In the late morning Aleks gave us a presentation entitled – An Introduction to the Chatham Islands where he described some of the history of the island as well as the flora and fauna that we might come across over the next few days. After that most people headed back out on deck to enjoy the sunny if a little windy conditions. It was a great day for birding with over thirty tubenose species seen during the day.

As we crossed onto the Chatham Rise the number of Chatham Albatrosses and Northern Royal Albatrosses increased, and eventually the Pyramid came into view. Nathan called an early dinner so we could all be out on deck to see it when we arrived. It made a beautiful sight in the early evening light and after doing a lap in the ship, with the sun setting slowly behind the Pyramid we made our way to our anchorage at Pitt Island.



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Day 14 - Sunday 23/11/08

South-east Island

We left our anchorage early in the morning and headed across to South-east Island to see what the conditions would be like for our planned zodiac cruise. The nor-westerly was still blowing but the sea was ok and the first group boarded the zodiacs by around 800. Over the next three hours everybody got to have a really good look around the coastline of South-east Island with good sightings of the Shore Plover and Chatham Islands Oystercatcher making many of the birders extremely happy. In addition to those birds we also saw White-fronted Terns, Tui, Pipits, Parakeets (both species) and Starlings moving around on the coastal fringe of the forest. The caves with the nesting terns were a real highlight and look spectacular once the sun came out in the later morning. Once we were all back aboard, the Captain had the anchor raised and with Northern Buller's Albatrosses wheeling about the ship, we turned and made our way northwards up the coast of the Chatham Islands.

Before we crossed Pitt Strait we made a small detour to check out Mangere and Little Mangere Islands. It was a beautiful afternoon, yet again the winds were light and the seas calm, and it really felt like we had left the subantarctic. The Chatham Island coastline lived up to its Mori name (which means misty skies) with most of the island covered in mist as we made our way up the coast. As we came through Pitt Strait a pod of Orcas joined the ship and for the next 45 minutes we were treated to the spectacular sight of Orcas feeding and displaying around the ship. It was an incredible end to a fantastic day and for many it will be remembered as one of the highlights of the trip.

We made our way into Waitangi harbour just on dusk and after dinner several people took the opportunity to spend some time star gazing with clear skies and warm temperature providing for perfect conditions on the top deck.

Day 15 - Monday 24/11/08

Chatham Island

We awoke to the site of Waitangi, the small main town of the Chatham Islands, lit up by the beautiful dawn light. It was to be an early breakfast, with the first zodiac starting to ferry people ashore by 7:30. Once ashore, the Chatham Island school buses came to pick us up and we made our way to the Tuku reserve, a site that was donated three generations ago by a local family for the benefit of conservation. About one-third of the group did a long walk into the reserve itself while the rest went on a shorter walk on the outskirts of the reserve through a gully and down towards the coast.

The weather had stayed calm and clear, with sunshine accompanying us for most of the walk. Both groups had a great opportunity to look at the unique flora of the Chatham Islands close up and the birdlife didn't disappoint either. Chatham Island Red-crowned Parakeets were in abundance on the shorter walk, flitting between the trees in the forested areas and the Parea or Chatham Island pigeon were also observed in good numbers. Other birds seen include the Shining Bronze Cuckoo and the Chatham Island Warbler, the latter being keenly sought after by many of the birds.

After the walks were finished we were taken back to Waitangi where some took advantage of the local pub to have a few early afternoon ales and meet some of the locals while others went for a beach walk. By 1:30 the zodiacs had started ferrying people back out to the ship and the increasing nor-westerly made for a slightly



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wet ride back out. Everybody was back aboard for a late lunch at 1500 and then many took the advantage of a free afternoon to rest or sort through some of the pictures that they had taken.

Pre-dinner drinks started at 1800 and nibbles were served up in the bar just after the bird list had been read. It was yet another successful day for the birders with several new birds added to most peoples lists and after dinner most people retired, tired but happy after a long day at the Chatham Islands.

Day16 - Tuesday 25/11/08

At sea

It was a wild and windy day for most of the day. The strong unseasonal northerly airstream had blown up some biggish swells and was gusting to 50 knots regularly throughout most of the day. Even the keenest of birders took some time out to rest or read, or start to make preparations for leaving the vessel in a few days time. There were still a few birds to be seen, dominated by Northern Royal and Buller's Albatross in the morning and a few other species of albatross later in the afternoon. Cape Petrels and Cook's Petrels were the most common of the smaller birds, with a few prions also seen a distance off, often too distant to identify conclusively.

By late afternoon the wind started to move around to the south and slowly but surely the seas abated a little. While it was still a little rough at pre-dinner drinks there was a great attendance with many people showing up for some social activity or the reading of the bird list. Sean and Ben put in a fantastic effort to make a delicious dinner under the difficult circumstances and many took the opportunity soon after to take an early night and catch up on some rest after the couple of rough weather.

Day 17 - Wednesday 26/11/08

At sea

Most people awoke well rested as the seas continued to abate during the night allowing a good nights sleep to be had by all. After breakfast the first activity of the day was the Enderby Trust presentation where Hannah, Iain, Eddie, Dan and Hannah were given the opportunity to talk about their motivation for coming on this trip and what they had got out of their journey over the last 17 days. All five of them obviously had a great experience and it undoubtedly encouraged them to continue their work in conservation and continue to travel and work in wild places. Soon after this presentation the Save the Albatross Auction was held for four prints donated by Tui de Roy. Our auctioneer Bruce, together with some generous people raised several hundred dollars for this worthwhile cause, and some people came away with some beautiful prints.

After lunch Nathan held a trip recap, followed by a slideshow that was put together by the staff. It was a great way to remember the events and activities of the last two and a half weeks and reminded people what a successful trip it had been. Accounts were settled during the latter half of the afternoon and mos then made their way to the bar for our last pre-dinner drinks.

The farewell dinner was a lively affair, and once again, Sean and Ben pulled out all the stops in putting together another delicious meal. The rest of the evening was taken up with packing and getting ready for disembarkation in Dunedin the following day.

Day 18 - Thursday 27/11/08

Dunedin

We sailed in through the heads of Otago Harbour just as the dawn light was breaking and during the cruise down we were treated to a spectacular sunset. After an early breakfast we docked at the wharf and following customs clearance we said our goodbyes to the staff and crew and left the ship for the last time, completing a successful and memorable trip to some of the best birding spots in the world.



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