

Burrowing seabirds survey on Bird Island (Falkland Is.) 4-11th Jan 2018

By Student Intern Amy Guest

First published 16th May 2018

Surveys of burrowing seabirds were carried out on Bird Island (Falkland Is.) by visiting researchers Dr Paulo Catry, University of Glasgow's Dr Ewan Wakefield and student Allan Stokes, accompanied by SAERI's Amy Guest, ornithologist Megan Boldenow, and University of Montana's PhD student T.J Clark.

The trip began with a FIGAS flight to Weddell Island before the four-hour boat journey on The Golden Fleece, hugging the Port Stephens coastline until they reached Bird Island. Before long, the island was alive with the noise of dozens of chatty Fur Seals and thousands of nesting seabirds



Camping amongst the thick tussac grass, they were treated to not only the best of Falkland's weather, but also daily sightings of 20-30 bird species, as well as South American Fur Seals and Southern Sea Lions. By day three, there was even a lone and unassuming Southern Elephant Seal that decide to spend a few days resting not too far from Dr Catry's tent!



The group had a successful week counting burrows of Thin-Billed Prions and Wilson's Storm Petrels, and took measurements of birds in occupied nests. Evidence of the birds leaving and returning to their burrows was also captured using motion and heat sensing camera traps laid out by the team at the beginning of the week.

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Making the most of the summer's daylight hours, the team were also able to record additional information such as counting cliff-side nests of Dolphin Gulls, Brown Skuas, Rock and Imperial Shags, and also collected ticks from various seabird species to aid an ongoing multi-site study.

Special thanks go out to Brian, Monica and Andrew on Weddell Island and Jerome, Dave and Evie on the Golden Fleece for their hospitality and help in making the trip possible.



(Photos by T.J. Clark, A. Guest and P. Catry)