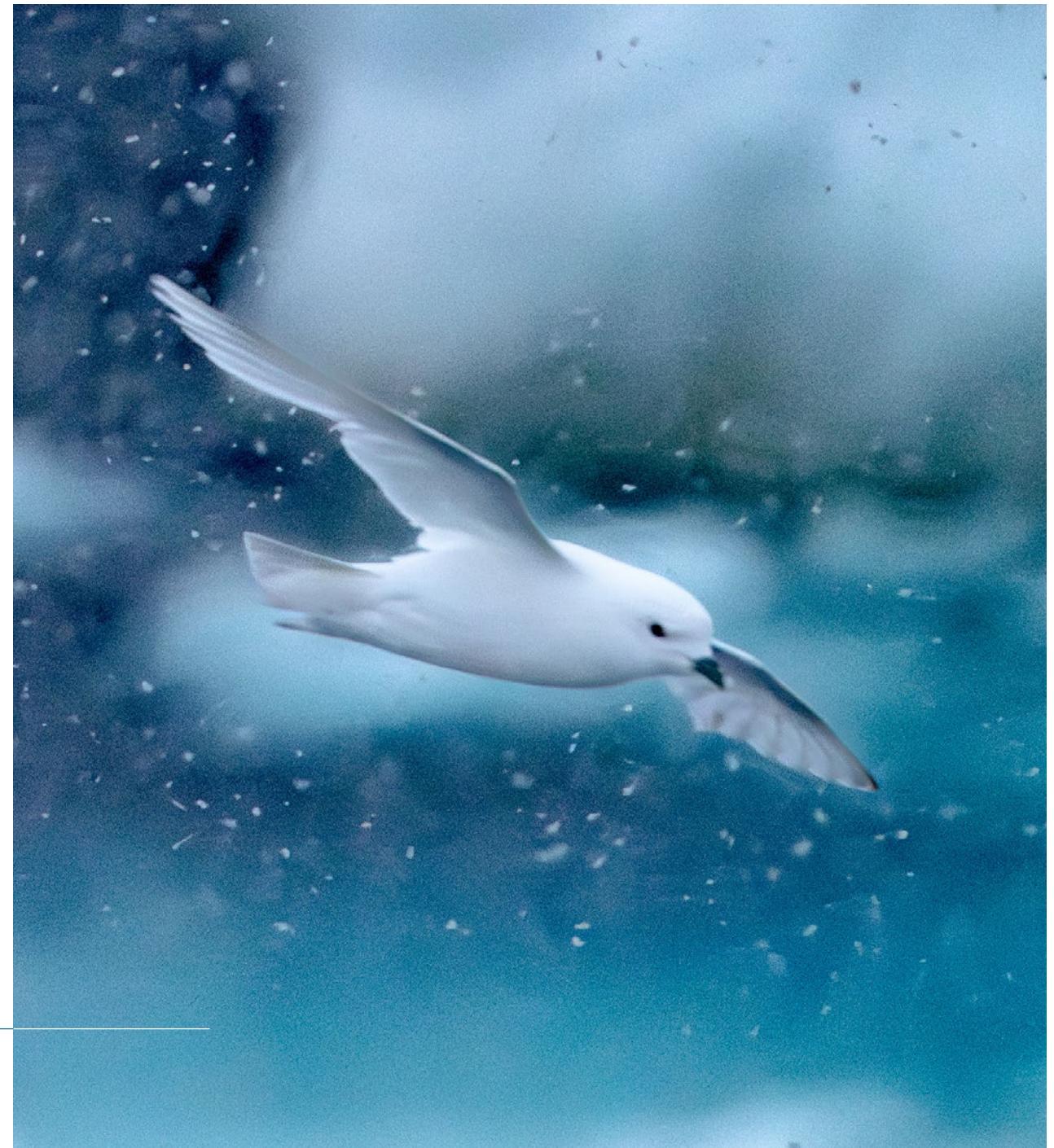




# Mawson's Antarctica

Aboard *Douglas Mawson* | 12 December 2025 – 3 January 2026





Mawson's Antarctica

12 December 2025 – 3 January 2026

# Hobart, Tasmania

DAY 1 | Tuesday 12 December 2025

**Latitude:**

43°04.4' S

**Longitude:**

147°25.4' E

**Course:**

Alongside

**Speed:**

0 knots

**Wind Speed:**

4 knots NE

**Barometer:**

1015 hPa

**Air Temp:**

18°C

Today our journey begins in the charming city of Hobart, the capital of Australia's island state of Tasmania. December 12th 2025 will forever be marked as the first day of our Mawson's Antarctica expedition aboard the *Douglas Mawson*. After a good night's sleep, we enjoyed breakfast and time at leisure before visiting the Mawson's Huts Replica Museum.

The Mawson's Huts Replica Museum is the world's only full-scale copy of a building from the heroic era of Antarctic exploration. Built to support conservation of the original Cape Denison huts used during the 1911-14 Australasian Antarctic Expedition, it stands on the Hobart waterfront near Mawson's 1911 departure point and serves as an educational centre promoting the AAE's legacy.

After an eventful morning it was time to begin our journey to meet the ship and its Aurora crew. At the pier we were greeted with warm smiles. Once on board, welcome refreshments awaited us in the SY Aurora Bar, then our hotel team helped us navigate the

decks to our cabins and settle into our home for the next 23 days. Before long, our Expedition Leader Greg Mortimer invited us into the Lecture Theatre to welcome us officially.

We were introduced to a multi-skilled Expedition Team eager to share their knowledge. Onboard Expedition Manager Justine and Hotel Director Singh then walked us through life on board before the mandatory lifeboat drill. The sound of seven-short-one-long rings signalled us to don warm clothes and lifejackets and gather at the muster station. Before dinner we exchanged jackets, labelled water bottles and explored the ship. By 1900 we made our way to the dining rooms to enjoy a superb meal prepared by our talented galley team.

Together we total 122 Expeditioners from Australia (105), Canada (1), China (2), India (1), New Zealand (4), the UK (4) and the USA (5), along with 85 crew from around the globe.

After many hours of travel for some, it is time to breathe in the sea air and get excited for the next 23 days of adventure.



# South East of Tasmania | Tasman Sea

DAY 2 | Saturday 13 December 2025

**Latitude:**  
45°10.75' S  
**Longitude:**  
149°18.41' E

**Course:**  
155°  
**Speed:**  
12.7 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
6 knots W  
**Barometer:**  
1005 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
16°C

In the middle of the night, the Douglas Mawson untied the mooring lines and pulled away from Macquarie wharf in Hobart to start our voyage south. We travelled out of the Derwent Estuary and down the east coast of Tasmania during the night. We woke to smooth seas with a following breeze, gentle conditions that eased us into the voyage and helped us settle into the rhythm of life at sea. A few albatrosses circled the ship as we made our way to the dining room for breakfast.

We began our mandatory briefings in the lecture theatre on deck 5, learning about Zodiac operations and the importance of biosecurity. We then brought our outer clothing to the lounge to inspect and clean our gear using vacuums, tweezers and magnifying glasses, followed by a visit to the mudroom to orient ourselves, dip tripods in disinfectant and try on the trusty Muck Boots.

To learn more about the seabirds around us, we attended a presentation by Heidi, our onboard ornithologist and self-proclaimed 'bird enthusiast'. The Southern Ocean hosts a diverse range of seabirds, from wandering albatrosses with the longest wingspan in the world to tiny storm petrels. Out on deck we put this knowledge into practice. More than 30 observers assisted during a 30-minute seabird survey, recording eight species including white-headed petrel, northern giant petrel, antipodean albatross and several shearwaters. The survey paused briefly when a distant whale blow was spotted and confirmed by Dani as a sei whale.

We ended the day with a canapé and drink in the lounge, meeting Captain Jorge Ferdinez and his officers before Greg outlined the weather ahead in the Southern Ocean.





# Tasman Sea

DAY 3 | Sunday 14 December 2025

**Latitude:**  
48°52.6' S  
**Longitude:**  
152°59.7' E

**Course:**  
145°  
**Speed:**  
13 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
6 knots NNE  
**Barometer:**  
979 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
14°C

The forecast winds did not eventuate overnight, and we rolled gently southward. Cooler air on the outer decks marked our progress, while albatrosses, white-chinned petrels and shearwaters greeted early risers on deck 8. By breakfast we were halfway to Macquarie Island and nearing the Subtropical Front, where we would track the seawater temperature over the coming days.

Our climatologist, Katja, delivered a presentation on the Southern Ocean, describing the importance of the Antarctic Circumpolar Current and explaining that it carries around 100 times the flow of all the world's rivers combined. Data gathered by elephant seals and autonomous sea gliders illustrated how these currents influence global water movement. Katja concluded with the consequences of sea

ice reduction and the Southern Ocean's role in absorbing and releasing carbon dioxide.

After lunch, Helena from the Macquarie Island Conservation Foundation spoke about the island's World Heritage status, rare geological exposure and rich wildlife. Sir Douglas Mawson's advocacy in 1933 helped establish a wildlife sanctuary, ending much of the earlier exploitation. The Foundation aims to support science and raise awareness of this remarkable part of Australia.

A satellite flyover drew many of us to deck 9 for a Citizen Science cloud survey, learning how ground-truthing assists NASA. Later, our kayak guide Liz hosted bar trivia, and at recap we met several officials and scientists travelling with us, each contributing valuable expertise to the voyage.





# Tasman Sea

DAY 4 | Monday 15 December 2025

**Latitude:**

53°04.2' S

**Longitude:**

158°07' E

**Course:**

140°

**Speed:**

12.3 knots

**Wind Speed:**

5 knots N

**Barometer:**

969 hPa

**Air Temp:**

11°C

We sailed eastward all day in following seas, making good progress towards our windswept destination, Macquarie Island. This gave the Douglas Mawson a gentle roll that most Expeditioners were now comfortable with after two days at sea.

Sophia from the Mawson's Hut Foundation opened the programme with the geology and history of Macquarie Island. She described its discovery by Captain Frederick Hasselborough aboard the Perseverance and the visits of early explorers including Bellingshausen, Wilkes, Scott and Shackleton. She finished with the Australian Antarctic Expedition's 1911 wireless relay station and the work of Leslie Blake, who produced the island's first detailed map.

After lunch, assistant expedition leader Isabelle delivered the mandatory IAATO briefing and the wildlife guidelines set by the

Australian Antarctic Division and Tasmanian National Parks.

A Citizen Science cloud and seabird survey followed, led by Stephen and Heidi. Thousands of prions and several wandering, light-mantled and grey-headed albatrosses surrounded the ship.

Lauren hosted the first meeting of the 'Yarn Club' in the SY Aurora bar, followed by Jamie's introduction to expedition photography. Later, kayak guide Liz ran another lively bar trivia session, again won by the Emperor Leopards.

At recap, Greg outlined plans for tomorrow's activities at Macquarie Island, with hopes for an early landing at Sandy Bay. The day ended with our first sighting of the island's northeast corner, backlit by the setting sun.





# Macquarie Island

DAY 5 | Tuesday 16 December 2025

**Latitude:**

54°32.5' S

**Longitude:**

158°55.5' E

**Course:**

Drifting

**Speed:**

0.5 knots

**Wind Speed:**

5 knots NW

**Barometer:**

980 hPa

**Air Temp:**

7°C

After a rocky night, we woke to a beautiful view of Macquarie Island. As expected from the forecast, the swell and wind made conditions too challenging, and Greg Mortimer cancelled the morning landing at Sandy Bay. Even without going ashore, the bay was a wonderful place to spend the morning. King penguins and royal penguins swam around the ship, glowing in the soft light. The royal penguins were a particular highlight, as they are endemic to Macquarie Island and rarely seen elsewhere. It was a memorable start to the day despite the conditions.

The bay also offered views of several elephant seals, many giant petrels, albatrosses, skuas and prions circling the ship. A striking white-morph giant petrel passed several times. While

awaiting better conditions, Helena delivered another engaging lecture on board about the island.

A second attempt at Sandy Bay was impossible, so we repositioned to Lusitania Bay. We passed Waterfall Bay and several penguin colonies before reaching one of the world's largest king penguin colonies, an estimated 120,000 pairs among the rusting digesters of the island's darker past.

With winds up to 50 knots, a Zodiac cruise was unsafe, but the vast king penguin colony remained unforgettable. Liz's pre-recap trivia lifted spirits before briefing, recap and a well-earned dinner.





# Sandy Bay | The Isthmus, Macquarie Island

DAY 6 | Wednesday 17 December 2025

**Latitude:** 54°33.9' S  
**Longitude:** 158°56.1' E  
**Course:** At Anchor  
**Speed:** 0.0 knots

**Wind Speed:** 7 knots N  
**Barometer:** 985 hPa  
**Air Temp:** 8°C

The swell that had kept us shipbound eased overnight, and by morning a landing at Sandy Bay was finally possible. Our Zodiac drivers brought us ashore with confidence, where we were greeted by royal penguins on the beach, king penguins calling as they marched past and elephant seal weaners inspecting the shore bags, which were disinfected before returning to the ship.

At the top of a ladder and boardwalk, we enjoyed a distant view of the royal penguin colony on the hillside among mounds of tussock grass. Below, several thousand king penguins huddled together on the beach, many in the midst of moulting.

It was a remarkable wildlife spectacle and a privilege to set foot on remote Macquarie Island. Once everyone was back

on board, we navigated north and anchored in Buckles Bay before going ashore at the Isthmus, the narrow neck of land connecting the ANARE station to the rest of the island.

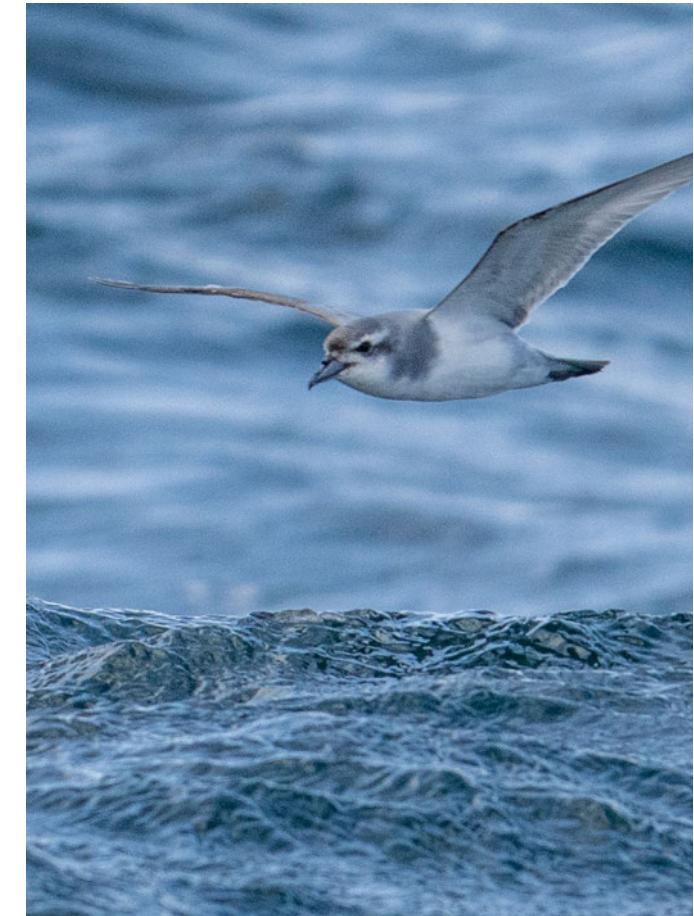
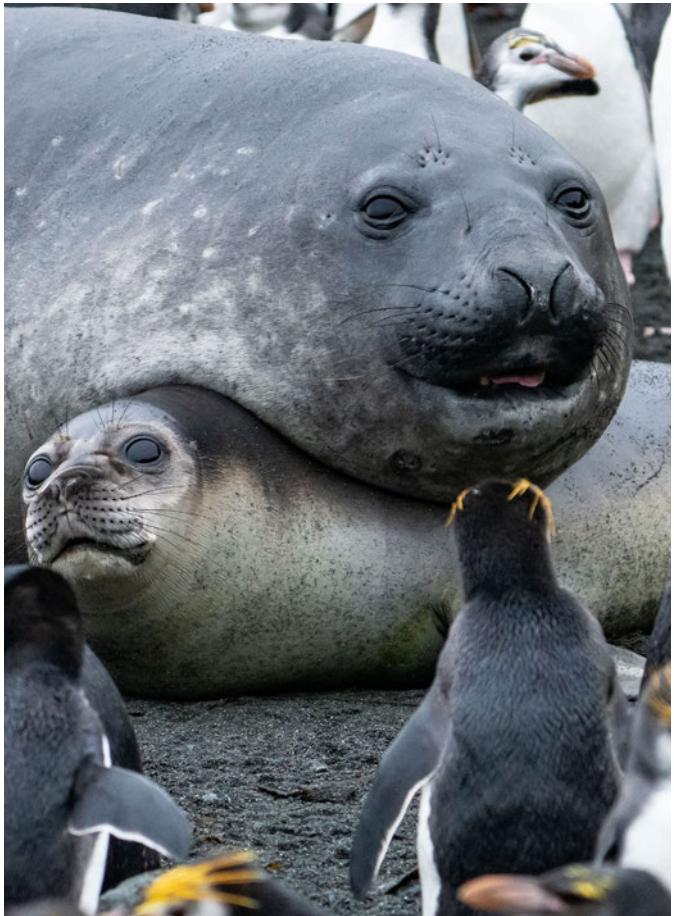
There was much to see. At a gentoo penguin colony, fluffy chicks chased their parent for food while a newly hatched chick remained on the nest. Elephant seals rested in the tussock grass, and on the rugged western beach, Macquarie shags nested on rocky outcrops. Giant petrels, including several white morphs, soared overhead. Many of us climbed to an overlook with expansive views of the Southern Ocean.

Back on board, we gathered briefly in the lecture theatre to celebrate a hugely successful day before continuing our journey south. Antarctica awaits.











# At Sea

DAY 7 | Thursday 18 December 2025

**Latitude:** 57°46.0' S  
**Longitude:** 158°21.8' E  
**Course:** 196°  
**Speed:** 11.8 knots

**Wind Speed:** 7 knots WNW  
**Barometer:** 978 hPa  
**Air Temp:** 3°C

A tiny steel bubble of carpeted warmth, the Douglas Mawson surged through the waves as she bobbed across the swell, the low hum of generators giving way to the chatter of Expeditioners and crew as a grey-fingered dawn broke. Tired but satisfied after two days of poor weather and uncertainty, culminating in two successful landings on Macquarie Island, an air of contentment settled on board.

Salt spray ran down the windows, a dismal sight from inside, yet outside a timeless world of froth and feathers thrived. Birds soared, swept and sheared from wavetop to wavetop. This was not simply a day on board a ship; it was a day in the fabled Southern Ocean, with nothing to our east or west but ourselves. Pacing the decks, we scrutinised the birds, applying our knowledge to identify and record their numbers,

hoping that understanding them might one day help protect the space we share. We also observed the atmosphere, contributing to satellite-based studies of heat distribution and climate. Meanwhile, on board, we learned more about the harsh yet hopeful human history of Macquarie Island and looked ahead to Antarctica with a talk on the seals we had seen and those we might encounter.

At recap we reflected on our journey so far and looked forward to what lay ahead. During the day we crossed the Antarctic Convergence, placing us biologically in Antarctica, and at 2302 we crossed 60°S, placing us politically there as well. Studying ice charts, we prepared for challenges to come, excited for the first sight of ice.







# At Sea

DAY 8 | Friday 19 December 2025

**Latitude:** 61°18.1' S  
**Longitude:** 153°50.0' E  
**Course:** 255°  
**Speed:** 10.8 knots

**Wind Speed:** 5 knots SW  
**Barometer:** 988 hPa  
**Air Temp:** 2°C

When you are one of the loneliest ships in the ocean, even inanimate objects feel like company. The sky and sea were twinned in grey on our second sea day towards Antarctica, and the appearance of a tabular iceberg on the horizon brought great excitement, a striking something in the midst of so much nothing. Despite the biting polar wind, many Expeditioners headed outside to glimpse this wandering titan. The ice was travelling in the opposite direction to us, its origin unknown beyond the certainty that it had come from the white continent.

After a few quick photos, most retreated inside for warm drinks, but those who lingered were rewarded with the first snow petrel of the voyage. Along with the iceberg, this pure white bird was one of the clearest signs that Antarctica

was near. It vanished as quickly as it appeared, echoing Shackleton's description of a snow petrel flashing into sight against dark water.

Back on board, the day continued with lectures and activities covering topics from the life of Sir Douglas Mawson to the hunt for the magnetic south pole, along with another lively trivia session.

One of the most popular talks was Snowy's introduction to the remarkable world of penguins. He described the extraordinary adaptations that allow them to thrive in such a hostile environment and prepared us for the species we may encounter in the coming weeks. The first whispers of emperor penguins arose, though those regal birds would have to wait.





# At Sea

DAY 9 | Saturday 20 December 2025

**Latitude:**

62°08.9' S

**Longitude:**

145°10.5' E

**Course:**

263°

**Speed:**

9.8 knots

**Wind Speed:**

6 knots NW

**Barometer:**

991 hPa

**Air Temp:**

1°C

Greg woke us with news that overnight we had travelled through an area with increasing numbers of icebergs and frequent humpback whale sightings. It was noticeably colder outside, down to -1°C. Unfortunately, the conditions did not help us spot either, as a uniform blanket of mist restricted visibility to around 100 metres. For some, the calmer conditions were welcome, bringing smoother waters.

Katja delivered an excellent talk introducing many aspects of Antarctica, from its history to its physical, biological, human and political dimensions. It gave everyone a deeper appreciation of how different and unique this vast continent is and whetted our appetite for the days ahead.

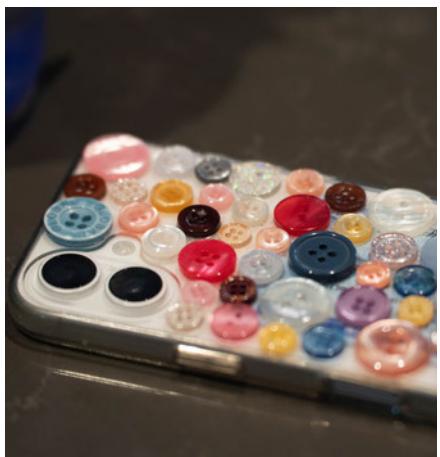
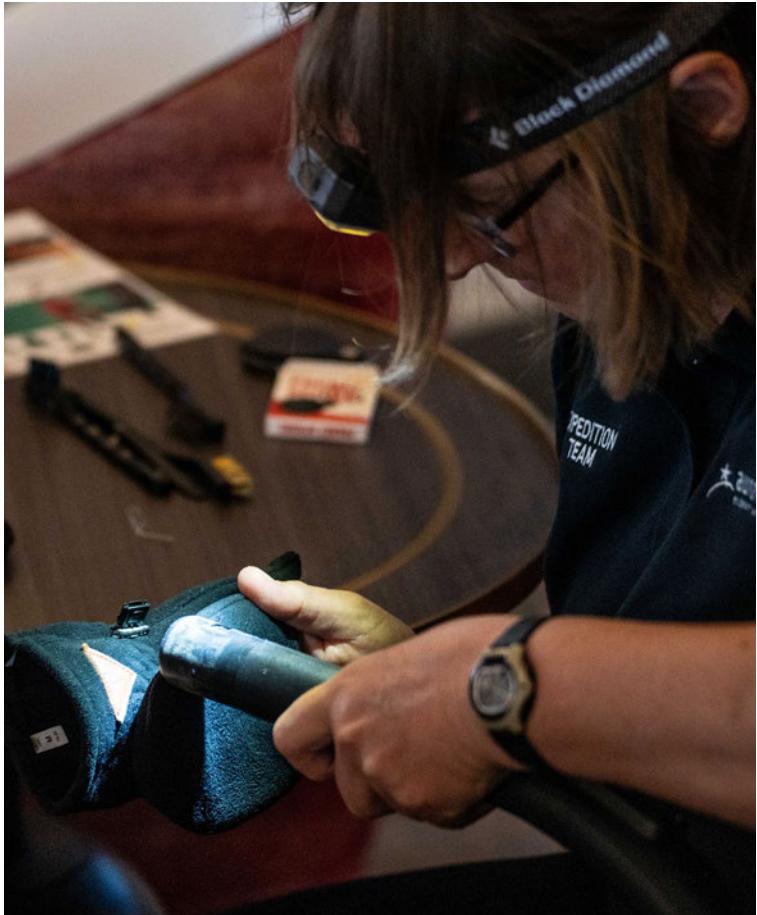
After lunch it was time for another biosecurity session, now that we had left the subantarctic environment and were about

to enter a very different region. Everyone returned to the lecture lounge to ensure their gear contained no remnants from Macquarie Island. With everything checked and spotless, we were ready to continue south.

Alex delivered two afternoon lectures on ice: first glaciers and icebergs, then sea ice, with afternoon tea between them. With this new understanding, we felt better prepared for the ice we expected to encounter ahead.

At recap, Greg outlined the current ice and weather situation and presented our potential options for the coming days. The ice remains a moving challenge, so we will press on southwest to assess conditions and decide which of three alternatives offers the best chance of maximising our activities. Time will tell.





# Douglas Mawson in the Ice | At Sea

DAY 10 | Sunday 21 December 2025

**Latitude:**  
63°37.8' S  
**Longitude:**  
141°35.3' E  
**Course:**  
Drifting  
**Speed:**  
0.0 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
2 knots NE  
**Barometer:**  
994 hPa  
**Air Temp:**  
2°C

Some of us woke to the sound of ice scraping against the hull. Captain Jorge and expedition leader Greg attempted to take the ship into the ice in front of Commonwealth Bay, but it proved too thick. Later we learned that even the French icebreaker *Astrolabe* had turned back. We continued west and reached a beautiful patch of loose drift ice beside a tabular iceberg, an ideal location for a Zodiac cruise, 185 nautical miles from land and over 3400 metres of water below.

Twelve Zodiacs set off after breakfast. Snow petrels, southern fulmars, Wilson's storm petrels and mottled petrels circled us as we cruised around the iceberg, admiring its shifting blue tones and early-forming arches. Waves occasionally struck an ice cavern, erupting into white spray. We then explored the sea ice, weaving through floes. Yellow patches beneath the ice revealed

growing algae, the base of the food chain for krill and, in turn, penguins. Some were lucky enough to spot Adélie penguins resting on the floes. Greg enjoyed a rare chance to 'go boating with his wife', as Marge joined his Zodiac.

In the afternoon Gill presented on her work, the Antarctic Treaty system and the Australian Antarctic Division. Snowflakes began to fall, adding to the atmosphere as many headed outside to watch the sea ice and several humpback whale blows. Other activities included Greenlandic bead jewellery with Lauren, cloud observations with Heidi and Stephen, and bar trivia with Liz. At recap, Greg reviewed the latest ice charts and outlined plans to continue west towards more open ice and the Dibble Ice Tongue.









# At Sea

DAY 11 | Monday 22 December 2025

**Latitude:** 63°37.8' S  
**Longitude:** 141°35.3' E  
**Course:** Drifting  
**Speed:** 0.0 knots

**Wind Speed:** 2 knots NE  
**Barometer:** 994 hPa  
**Air Temp:** 2°C

We began the day, as Greg said, with a grey sky and grey sea, feeling the anticipation of what might lie ahead as we continued west. A leisurely morning at sea was brightened by Dani's talk in the lecture theatre about the lives of whales, helping us imagine what it is like to exist in an environment so different from our own. After lunch we joined Emma McEwin in the lounge, where she shared insights into her family's history through recollections of her great-grandmother Paquita Mawson, Sir Douglas' wife. Her photographs and stories added a human dimension to the heroic-age narrative.

A cloud survey drew a few hardy souls to the outer decks, where they also enjoyed watching groups of Antarctic petrels with their striking black and white colouring.

Yarn club met again and continues to grow alongside the knitted projects. At recap, John Turnbull from Sydney University made a spirited case for algae being cooler than birds or trees, while Sophia Minter from the Mawson's Hut Foundation delivered an inspiring reminder that we follow in the footsteps of those who came before, travelling west in the same spirit of discovery.

After watching Jonathan Chester's film *The Last Husky*, an energetic crowd gathered on deck 8 to look for wildlife. Drifting through fields of sea ice with snow petrels gliding around the ship, we were rewarded with sightings of several Adélie penguins and crabeater seals hauled out on passing floes. Perhaps an emperor penguin will be next.





# East Antarctic Ice Sheet

DAY 12 | Tuesday 23 December 2025

**Latitude:**  
65°28.7' S

**Longitude:**  
137°02.8' E

**Course:**  
Ice navigation

**Speed:**  
4 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
6 knots SE

**Barometer:**  
984 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
1°C

The modern expedition cruise industry often feels far removed from the Heroic Age of Exploration. Certain elements are shared, such as on board lectures and rare latitudes, but on 23 December the two worlds seemed to merge. Our challenging and bewildering journey through thick pack ice could easily have taken place a century ago.

Efforts continued through the night, with the bridge working through cold blue civil twilight to push further south. A drone was flown at 2am to search for a lead, and twice more by 6am. Around the ship penguins appeared, first Adélie and then, as more people headed outside, a stately gathering of emperor penguins. Flying birds were buffeted by sleet and gales, making the penguins' decision to remain earthbound seem wise.

The Douglas Mawson crunched on, pushing through thick ice in pursuit of the Antarctic coast. By now we were one of the most isolated ships on the planet, closer to the International Space Station than to any settlement. The ice continued to break and the winds continued to blow, but 22 nautical miles from the coast our luck ran out. Dense pack and worsening weather left the bridge team no option but to turn north.

This echoed decisions made by the best leaders of earlier expeditions. Shackleton once wrote that a leader must act sensibly and protect the lives of those with him, for 'man can only do his best' when faced with the forces of nature.





# East Antarctic Ice Navigation

DAY 13 | Wednesday 24 December 2025

**Latitude:**

64°34.8' S

**Longitude:**

131°12.3' E

**Course:**

070°

**Speed:**

9.3 knots

**Wind Speed:**

7 knots E

**Barometer:**

987 hPa

**Air Temp:**

0°C

Christmas Eve began with the Douglas Mawson pushing northeast through thick sea ice, a chilly greeting for early risers. Captain Jorge and ice pilot Maxim worked through the challenge and soon guided us into clear water, scattered floes a faint reminder of the morning's white expanse.

After breakfast, Alex invited us to the lecture theatre to explore the geological foundations of Antarctica and the subantarctic islands, touching on the separation of the continent, the cooling of the poles and the emergence of life that helped shape the world we know. This sense of connectedness was a fitting idea to contemplate on Christmas Eve.

With Alex's talk in mind, shipboard activities continued. Readers worked steadily, knitters carried on their projects,

artists created Christmas cards in the science lab and the library puzzle neared completion. Others visited Mawson's Hut virtually, guided by Lara through the Mawson's Hut Foundation experience. Snowy then shared stories from his first year in Antarctica at Casey Station with the Australian Antarctic Division.

Despite being a day at sea, we were busy. A Christmas edition of trivia with Liz led into carols in the bar, a joyful link to the long history of festive celebrations in Antarctica. For those far from home, such days take on deep meaning, echoing the experiences of earlier expeditions.

A festive recap and briefing followed before dinner and the close of Christmas Eve on the Douglas Mawson.





# South Magnetic Pole

DAY 14 | Thursday 25 December 2025

**Latitude:**

64°29.4' S

**Longitude:**

136°32.4' E

**Course:**

A drift

**Speed:**

0.0 knots

**Wind Speed:**

1 knots E

**Barometer:**

1003 hPa

**Air Temp:**

2°C

Merry Christmas!

The Douglas Mawson began this special day floating over the South Magnetic Pole. All lines of variation radiate from this point, and on the bridge the electronic chart made our position glow like a celestial beacon. Grey fog and still air created an eerie calm, the long swell glassy and no birds in sight. A band of sea ice appeared on radar, and the Captain navigated towards it. We lined the deck to watch brash ice drift past, each piece coated in fresh snow like a slushy drink. Snow petrels flew by in their beautiful white plumage. As these were some of our final moments in the sea ice, we gathered for a group photo with the floating brash behind us.

The ice softened the swell, and once clear of it the decision was made to offer a polar plunge. A carnival atmosphere

filled the mudroom as hardy Expeditioners lined up to leap from a Zodiac tethered at the side gate. Yelps of glee and frozen shock echoed from the decks above. In total, 37 Expeditioners, three crew and five Expedition Team members took the plunge.

A special Christmas lunch followed, complete with penguin-shaped marzipan-topped chocolate cake and pavlova. As the Douglas Mawson steamed north, some napped while others watched for birds. Later, teams gathered in the lounge for Liz's game 'How Big Is It?', a lively and chaotic contest with points traded on the 'krill market'. Another festive meal rounded out the evening, and even Santa managed to find us on board.





# Southern Ocean

DAY 15 | Friday 26 December 2025

**Latitude:**

62°26.43' S

**Wind Speed:**

5 knots NW

**Longitude:**

144°47.9' E

**Barometer:**

1002 hPa

**Course:**

065°

**Speed:**

11.5 knots

**Air Temp:**

2°C

We woke to calm seas, clearing skies and a rare glimpse of blue skies. Lara from the Mawson's Huts Foundation then shared the story of Mawson's Western Party, led by Frank Wild and sustained by 'common sense, loyalty and good humour' as they worked in Queen Mary Land and Kaiser Wilhelm II Land. Despite the hardships, they lost no one and returned largely forgotten. Lara also spoke about Frank Hurley's role in the BANZARE expedition, his photographs capturing the humour, science, wildlife and landscapes of the era.

A whale sighting soon drew us on deck, where three humpback whales showed their tail flukes. We matched two to previous sightings off Australia's east coast, another rewarding contribution to Citizen Science.

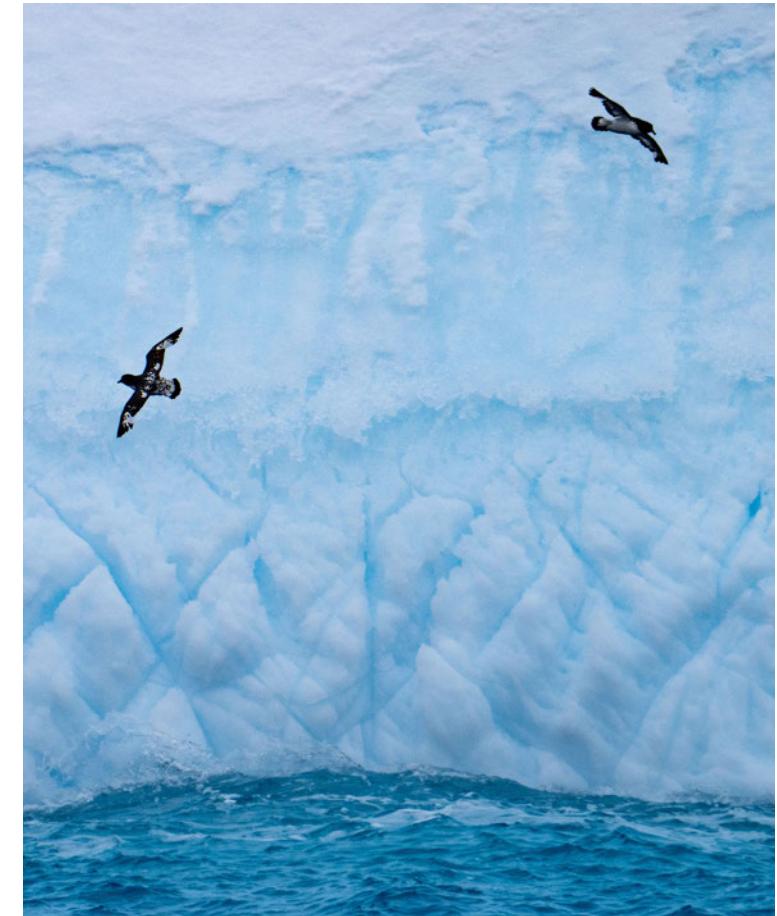
Later, Emma shared stories of food on Mawson's expeditions, from plum pudding ruined in the tropics to chocolate used as

currency. Although they carried 100 tons of supplies, the men relied heavily on penguin and seal meat.

After lunch, Jonathan spoke about his expeditions to Commonwealth Bay, including restoration surveys, scientific projects and work on historic structures. Battling rough seas and blizzards echoed experiences from a century earlier, though reverting to paper after a computer failure was a modern twist.

Lara and Sophia then outlined the Mawson's Huts Foundation's past, present and future, including the planned 2026–27 Conservation Expedition. At recap, several Expeditioners shared personal connections to the AAE, and an after-dinner auction led by Jamie raised an impressive \$8,285 for the Foundation.





# Southern Ocean

DAY 16 | Saturday 27 December 2025

**Latitude:**

60°41.2' S

**Longitude:**

153°07.6' E

**Course:**

063°

**Speed:**

10.8 knots

**Wind Speed:**

7 knots NW

**Barometer:**

1004 hPa

**Air Temp:**

7°C

We woke to Greg's dulcet tones announcing a broad band of icebergs ahead as we sailed northeast. These floating sentinels kept us entertained through breakfast.

Katia opened the day with an engaging overview of her polar career, from overwintering at Germany's Neumayer II Base and completing PhD research in atmospheric chemistry to ice-coring at Scott Base, Taylor Glacier, Union Glacier and Australia's Law Dome. She finished with one of her more adventurous stories, sailing across the Drake Passage with a kayak.

Our botanist Joselyn shared stories from her overwintering at South Pole and McMurdo, including the roles she held and the unique social traditions of station life. New Zealand mountain guide Davie then recounted his time as a field assistant and safety trainer at Scott Base.



Lauren followed with 'Crime in Antarctica', sharing tales ranging from a stabbing at Vostok Station to a poisoning at South Pole Station, as well as discussions of harassment issues on Antarctic bases.

Citizen Science cloud surveys and eBird counts with Heidi and Stephen filled the afternoon, with sightings of light-mantled albatrosses and prions. Liz hosted another lively trivia round, won by the BBBJKT team.

At recap, Dani discussed humpback whales and the Happywhale project, Alex explained the south magnetic pole and Ryan shared tales from his winters at Rothera and King George Island. After dinner, IAATO observer Kaaren offered a moving account of her journey from Dumont d'Urville to Concordia Base, a fitting close to another rich sea day.

# Southern Ocean

DAY 17 | Sunday 28 December 2025

**Latitude:**

58°26.9' S

**Longitude:**

160°44.4' E

**Course:**

057°

**Speed:**

11.6 knots

**Wind Speed:**

5 knots WSW

**Barometer:**

1006 hPa

**Air Temp:**

6°C

Overnight, the sea temperature rose noticeably, signalling that we had crossed the Antarctic Convergence and were firmly back in the subantarctic region of the Southern Ocean. Expedition leader Greg woke us just before breakfast to report calm following seas and a promising day ahead.

Katja began the morning with a data-rich and accessible lecture on climate change, followed by a discussion about the carbon footprint of travelling to this region. Our scientists from the University of New South Wales then outlined the important work they hoped to complete during their time on board.

In the library, an enthusiastic group gathered for Lauren's 'Death in Antarctica' murder mystery, complete with maps, call logs, CCTV stills, autopsy notes and red herrings. Small detective teams spent the day analysing evidence ahead of tomorrow's presentations.

After lunch, Lauren and Moniek hosted another Inuit beading workshop in the Citizen Science Centre, followed by Dani's engaging presentation on whaling. With the seas still kind, we gathered later for a hilarious game of Call My Bluff, where Liz and the team kept the whole room guessing.

Meanwhile, Heidi led a seabird survey on deck 8, where a huge flock of sooty shearwaters was recorded, accompanied by several pairs of light-mantled sooty albatrosses. A lively recap followed, with Stephen presenting Aurora Expeditions' sustainability initiatives and B Corp status, before Kaaren, Gill and a talented group of singers delighted us with sea shanties, including an original piece.

After dinner, we returned to the lecture theatre for a screening of Jonathan, Greg and Margaret's film about their 1987 ascent of Mount Minto in northern Victoria Land.





# Southern Ocean – approaching Campbell Island

DAY 18 | Monday 29 December 2025

**Latitude:**

55°23.7' S

**Longitude:**

165°56.8' E

**Course:**

034°

**Speed:**

11.1 knots

**Wind Speed:**

4 knots SW

**Barometer:**

1016 hPa

**Air Temp:**

7°C

What a lovely way to wake up, with a sky far clearer than anything we had seen in recent weeks. During breakfast the clouds slowly disappeared and we were treated to our first real sunshine on this voyage, a wonderful start to the day.

We had a full schedule, beginning with Jo, our New Zealand government observer, who gave an excellent talk on Campbell Island conservation ahead of tomorrow's visit. Joselyn followed with a fascinating lecture on the mega-herbs of the New Zealand subantarctic islands and the remarkable ways these plants adapt to their climate.

The pool was open today, much to the delight of many Expeditioners. Throughout the afternoon it was well used, with sunbeds offering a rare moment of warmth and relaxation that almost felt like a holiday.

Citizen Science activities filled the afternoon: a cloud survey with Stephen, our first chance to truly judge the shade of blue in the sky; a bird survey, with only a few sightings; and a plankton session in the Citizen Science Centre with Steph.

With the Auckland Islands group scheduled for the day after tomorrow, we were eager to learn more about the ambitious pest eradication programme underway there, a long-term project with promising early progress.

Before recap, Lauren hosted the conclusion of the murder mystery game, with 21 enthusiastic detectives presenting their findings. After dinner, Helena and John entertained us with a lively 'what is it' quiz featuring intriguing photos and unusual creatures. A beautiful final day at sea, and all of us looked forward to arriving at Campbell Island tomorrow.





# Campbell Island, New Zealand

DAY 19 | Tuesday 30 December 2025

**Latitude:**

52°33.97' S

**Longitude:**

168°09.78' E

**Course:**

At Anchor

**Speed:**

0.0 knots

**Wind Speed:**

3 knots NW

**Barometer:**

1022 hPa

**Air Temp:**

10°C

Entering Perseverance Harbour, we experienced the delight of mariners through the centuries: the sea lying flat and the ship finally ceasing its roll. Tumbling into Zodiacs, we went ashore and climbed the boardwalk to Col Lyall. Lush green vegetation rose above our heads, giving way to brown tussac and then the technicolour hues of the mega-herb gardens. Thick, wet mist dampened nobody's spirits as we gazed into the eyes of nesting southern royal albatrosses. On the still water below, a curious New Zealand sea lion inspected each Zodiac as it collected weary trampers and skimmed back to the Douglas Mawson. Kayak blades flashed along the rocky shore, long-rested muscles straining with pleasure.

Dashing north, we experienced what may be this author's finest seabird encounter. Campbell, grey-headed, Buller's,

light-mantled, white-capped and southern royal albatrosses made increasingly close inspections of the observation deck, while storm petrels, diving petrels and shearwaters swept past as though unaware of us. After dinner the birds returned, floating by the pool in low evening light, eyes glowing and heads swivelling in calm appraisal.

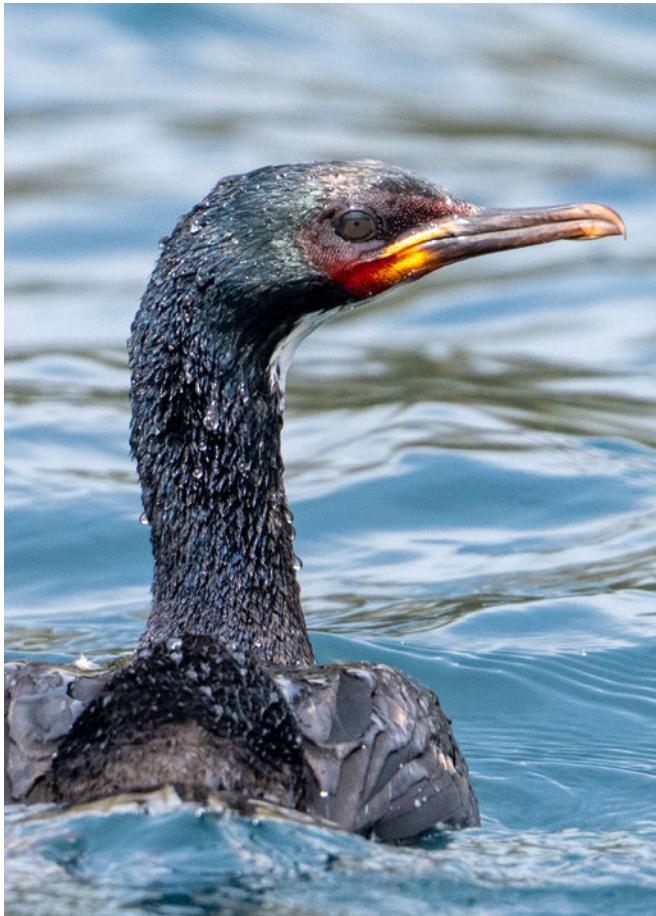
The giant petrels and great mollymawks faded into the background as the mighty royals crept closer, cruising like proud battleships, unflinching and unaframed. So close and so slow, we began to recognise individuals as they passed, imagining their long years of circumnavigation and steady ocean patrols before returning home to raise the next generation.

As darkness deepened, we slipped away, leaving the pelagic wanderers to soar on.











# At Sea | The Snares

DAY 20 | Wednesday 31 December 2025

**Latitude:** 48°13.0' S  
**Longitude:** 167°01.9' E  
**Course:** 296°  
**Speed:** 12.4 knots

**Wind Speed:** 7 knots E  
**Barometer:** 1004 hPa  
**Air Temp:** 13°C

The morning began with the unusual sound of two helicopters meeting the ship south of Stewart Island. Greg and Margaret were airlifted from deck 8 near the observation lounge, and within minutes they were on their way to Dunedin.

Jonathan then lifted our spirits with his unique take on penguins. Why are they so adorable, he asked, and why do we love them so much? Their upright waddle, stoicism during moulting or incubation and, of course, their tuxedos all play a part.

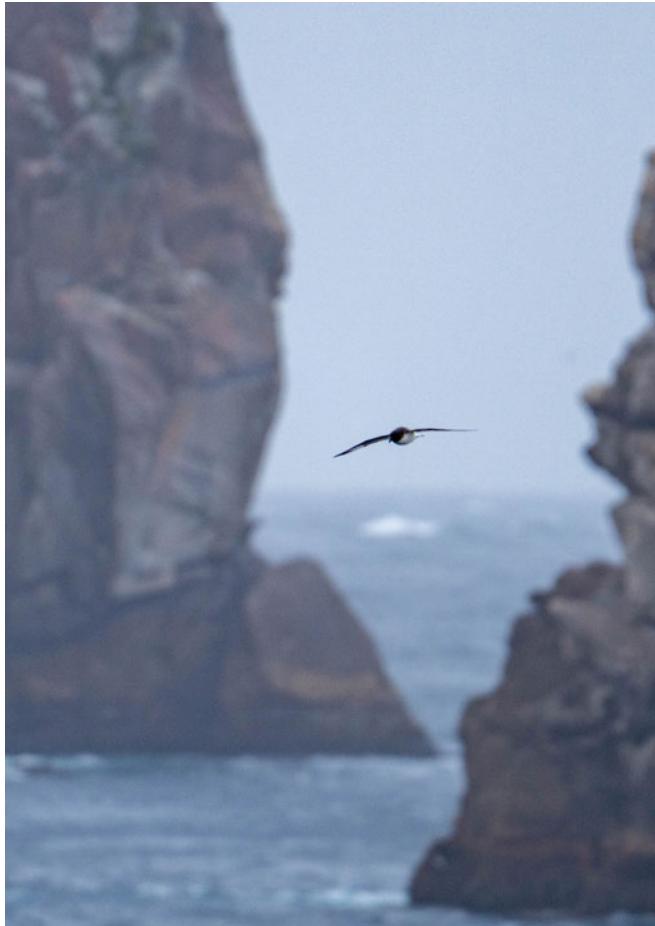
After lunch we reached the Snares, an unplanned but rewarding stop. We launched Zodiacs from the sheltered southern side of the main island. On our cruise we saw New Zealand fur seals, Buller's and Salvin's albatrosses and several Snares crested penguins. Hundreds of Cape petrels swooped over the waves, and a few lucky birdwatchers

glimpsed the endemic black robin and fernbird. Conditions were challenging, and once we left the shelter the Southern Ocean gave us a brisk baptism, but it remained a memorable Zodiac cruise.

At the evening briefing, Isabelle outlined plans for tomorrow's landing and hike on Enderby Island. Joselyn and John followed with a crash course in plants and algae, and Katja explained how Campbell Island's lonely tree helped define the Anthropocene.

With the ship underway, the planned BBQ moved indoors. The hotel and galley teams excelled, funny hats were chosen and music set the tone for New Year's Eve. Liz hosted another lively trivia round, and with big smiles, full bellies and enthusiastic dancing, we sailed into 2026.







# Enderby Island

DAY 21 | Thursday 01 January 2026

**Latitude:**

47°52.1' S

**Longitude:**

169°01.8' E

**Course:**

032°

**Speed:**

13.4 knots

**Wind Speed:**

4 knots SSW

**Barometer:**

1004 hPa

**Air Temp:**

13°C

Samuel Enderby's 18th-century whaling empire was so extensive that one of his ships appears in *Moby-Dick*. Today, his legacy lingers in the name of Enderby Island off Auckland Island's north shore. As the Zodiacs bounced toward the southern beach, dozens of sea lions crowded the shore. Enderby would likely have viewed them as profit, but for us aboard the *Douglas Mawson* they were a reassuring sign of a protected ecosystem.

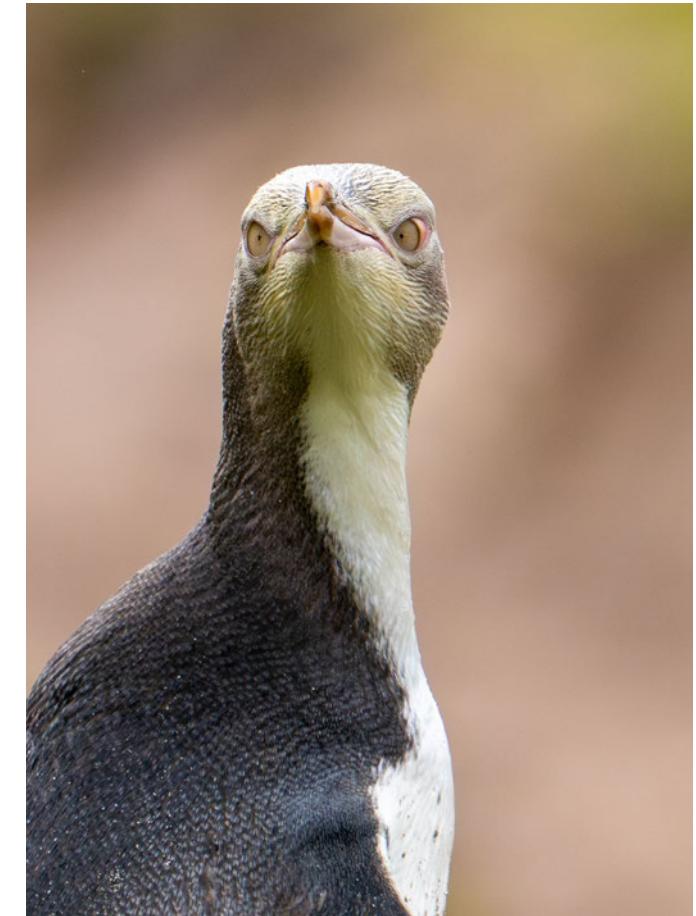
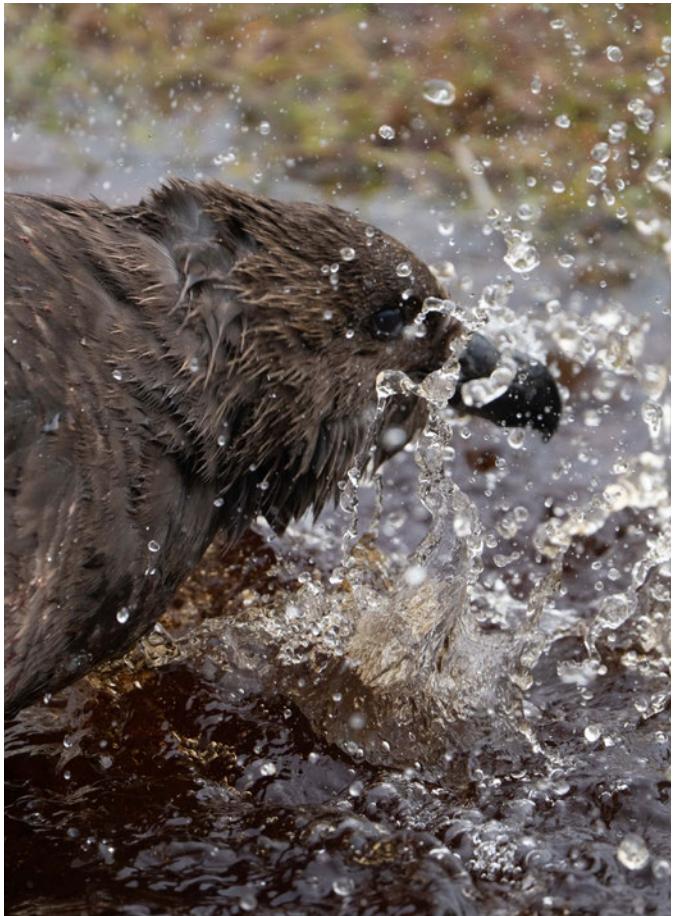
This little windswept paradise awaited us, although getting ashore was trickier than it looked from the ship, with aggressive swell breaking on the beach. Disembarkation relied on the heroic efforts of Ryan and Daniel in drysuits and some careful Zodiac piloting, plus a willingness from passengers to accept a bit of spray. Once ashore, Enderby showed its best face, from galumphing sea lions to birds tucked into the island's bushes

and the endangered yellow-eyed penguin. This sighting brought our tally to eight penguin species, nearly half of those that exist. It was also the rarest, now functionally extinct on mainland New Zealand and surviving here in one of its last refuges. Aware of their sensitivity, we held a 50 metre distance and watched their odd, jaundiced eyes from well back.

The sea lions made sure everyone stayed focussed while walking across the beach, but if it felt like warfare down there, the boardwalks to the island's north coast offered a much more serene experience. This feeling of calm continued into the afternoon with a Zodiac cruise off the north shore of Auckland Island. The day – in fact the year – had started with rock and roll, but in the calm, misty afternoon, it felt like it ended with a soothing symphony.









# At Sea | onward to Dunedin

DAY 22 | Friday 02 January 2026

**Latitude:**

47°52.1' S

**Longitude:**

169°01.8' E

**Course:**

032°

**Speed:**

13.4 knots

**Wind Speed:**

4 knots SSW

**Barometer:**

1004 hPa

**Air Temp:**

13°C

Most of us enjoyed a cosy sleep-in before beginning a busy final day. Stephen shared stories from his time caretaking on Maatsuyker Island, with Heidi chiming in about table-tennis scores and pie-crust artistry. Snowy then traced the history of Aurora's polar ships and the development of the Douglas Mawson's XBow design, which had made our passage so comfortable. Justine rounded things out with a succinct disembarkation briefing.

For a final science 'win', John shared video from the last sampling session of the voyage, featuring kelp and a mob of squat lobsters, highlighting the value of documenting under-sampled regions to improve broader ecosystem understanding.

After lunch, Joselyn and the Expedition Team led a discussion on sustainability and how to turn stewardship into action at home. Whether reducing personal carbon footprints, supporting regenerative initiatives, volunteering or making values-based purchasing choices, each of us can contribute to positive change.

Captain's cocktails gave us the chance to thank the ship's crew and Expedition Team for an unforgettable journey. Jamie's slideshow beautifully captured the voyage, and over dinner Hotel Director Mr Singh led a well-earned round of applause for the hotel team. We ended the night in the bar, toasting the voyage, our new on board family and the many memories we now share.





# Dunedin, New Zealand

DAY 23 | Saturday 03 January 2026

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**Latitude:**

45°52.5' S

**Wind Speed:**

2 knots SW

**Longitude:**

170°31.1' E

**Barometer:**

998 hPa

**Course:**

Alongside

**Speed:**

0.0 knots

**Air Temp:**

8°C

After a wonderful last day onboard, we woke from a solid night's sleep to see our mighty vessel, the Douglas Mawson, securely tied alongside the port of Dunedin. We enjoyed a final breakfast aboard before disembarking at 0900.

Aurora Expeditions thanks you for joining us aboard Douglas Mawson to Macquarie Island, East Antarctica and the NZ Sub Antarctic Islands. We hope to see you on the high seas again someday!

# Artwork

By Joanne Adler Ellings



# BBQ





# Polar Plunge









# Citizen Science





# Kayaking Log

Guides: Daniel Stavert, Liz MacNeil

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## 21 December 2025, AM: Southern Ocean pack ice – 7km

Arriving in calm waters on the morning of the 21st, the kayakers were ready to begin the kayak programme on the Douglas Mawson. Waiting for the Zodiacs to lower, the team gathered in the mudroom and ran through the last safety briefings and checks. Soon they could step out onto the marina and down into the Zodiac and out into the cold air of Antarctica. Launching from the Zodiac into the kayaks, the team's trepidation turned to joy as they were soon away and kayaking on the Southern Ocean. Curious seabirds came swooping in to investigate these strange colourful creatures, the red kayak hulls and the orange drysuits a striking contrast to the grey, blue and white of the Antarctic seascape. The beautiful snow petrels swooping in low, along with cape petrels and the graceful southern fulmar, all zooming

low on the ocean, the ground effect of compressed air under the wing of each bird adding to the magic of flight as each bird barely cleared each wave.

To the port side of the kayaks a huge iceberg loomed, its face sculpted with caves, crevasses and wind-washed walls. The surging swell boomed into caverns carved deep into the ice and precipitous pillars perched perilously on the periphery. The swell rolled through and bounced off the sheer walls of compressed snow and created a confused sea with challenging conditions for our first paddle.

Soon it was time to turn around from the huge berg and to take a moment to reflect on our position on the planet. The first kayak outing for the Douglas Mawson and a great way to start our kayak programme here in the Antarctic.



Number of Kayakers: 10  
Total Paddle Outings: 3  
Total Distance Paddled: 15.5 km

Kayakers:  
Mark Zimmerman  
Elizabeth Neuvar  
Jeannette McFarlane  
Madonna Clements  
Deborah Huth  
Michael Duggan

Elizabeth Aitken  
Robert Morgan  
Celia Grenning  
Bronwyn Dallow

### 30 December 2025, AM: Perseverance Harbour, Campbell Island – 3km

With the slow swell of the Southern Ocean behind us, the Douglas Mawson cruised into the sheltered waters of Perseverance Harbour. On the shoreline the bulky outlines of New Zealand sea lions rolling in the tussock grass could be seen, and the sleek profiles of porpoising fur seals escorted the ship into its anchorage.

The rolling hills and vivid green life on shore were a startling contrast for the kayakers as they prepared to leave the ship. There they had two hours to hike as high as they could up to the col before returning to the shore to join their kayaks. The boardwalk took us up through thick subantarctic forests, past the famous megaherbs of Campbell Island and into the high moorland of the exposed ridgelines. There, nestled amongst the tussock, the royal albatross waited. These huge

birds, their wings folded in tight, sat across the ridgeline in single nests widely separated from their peers, their size suddenly apparent in a way not possible when looking at a flying bird from a ship.

Soon it was time to run downhill through the slippery forest and back to shore to don our kayak outfits and slide away for a paddle. The sheltered waters of the harbour made a fantastic introduction to subantarctic sea kayaking. Curious sea lions came to investigate the colourful vessels, and the rare Campbell Island teal could be seen swimming in amongst the rock pools and shallows. The wind turned continuously but somehow Liz managed to keep it always at our backs as we cruised around the bay and returned to the Douglas Mawson after a busy but satisfying long morning on Campbell Island.

### 2 January 2026, PM: Port Ross, Auckland Island – 5.5km

After a windy morning at Enderby Island, the Douglas Mawson had shifted deeper into Port Ross. There the wind had increased through the day but the complex coastline hinted at sheltered waters. The deep coves also gave respite from the swell that had created such excitement at the beach on Enderby. A windy push in the Zodiac allowed the team to launch in calm conditions and soon the kayaks were away. Playing in the kelp forests of subantarctic New Zealand is always fun and this was no exception; the various species of bladderwrack, bull kelp and *Macrocystis* all showing endless movement and pattern in the swell. With the wind at our backs the kayaks could surf each bay, catch the eddy behind a rock reef or kelp bed, and breathe in the calm of a new cove. There, lush forests of *rātā* in their flowering red colours, the songs of blackbird, *tūī* and bellbird, and the

nervous eye of the shags on the rocks all provided a sense of the rich life of Auckland Island.

The wind itself ripping through the bay over our heads spoke to the stories of rough weather that led so many sailors to spend unplanned time surviving on these islands. Sea lions would appear suddenly behind the tails of kayaks, their snort of breath always a shock in the quiet of the bay.

Soon it was time to push out into the wind and ferry across the open water and into the window of shelter behind a beautiful basaltic island tucked just behind the aft of the ship. A final circumnavigation of this island, just for fun, and the kayakers re-embarked the Zodiac after a fun afternoon in the wind and waterways of Port Ross.

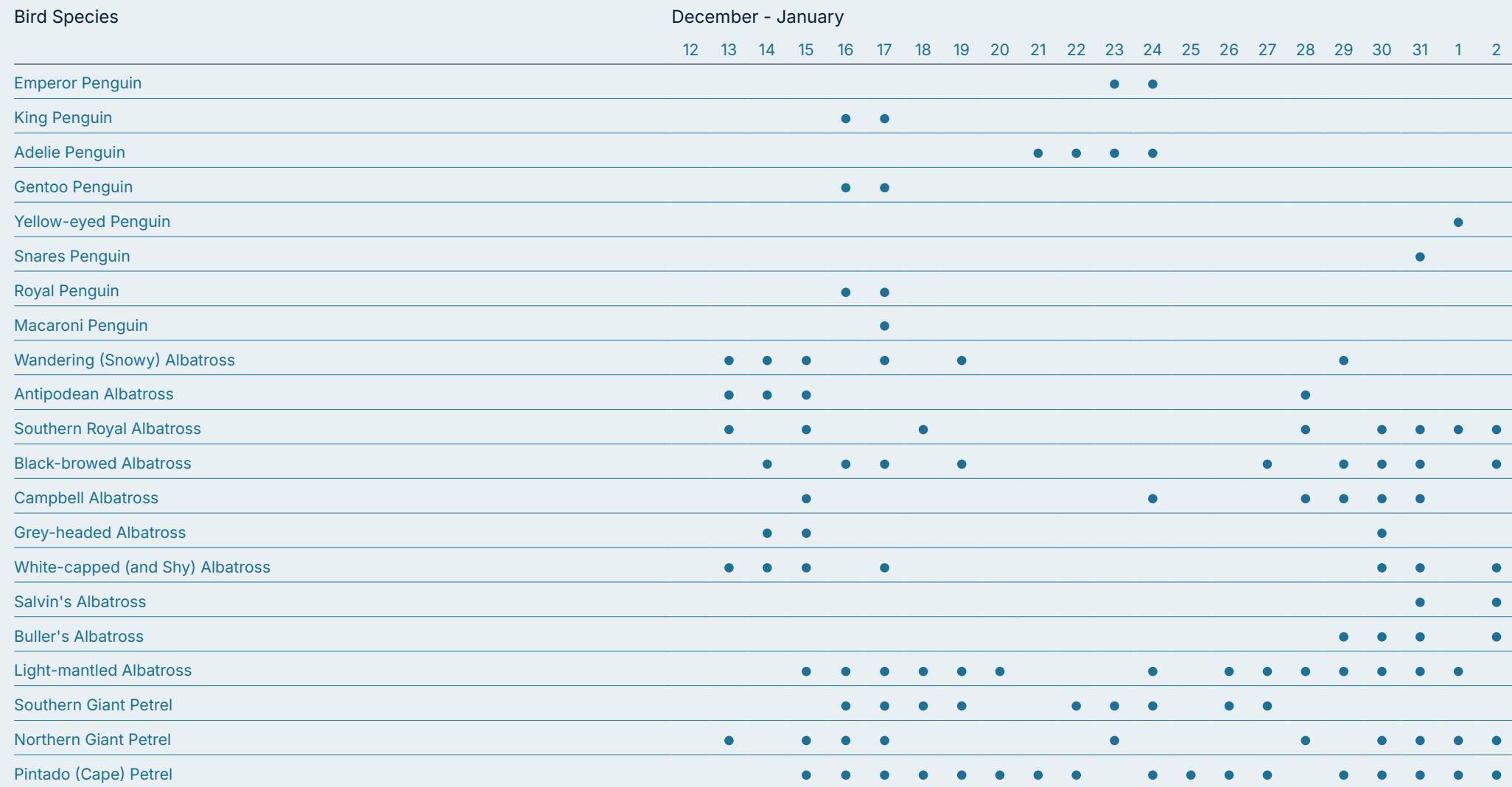


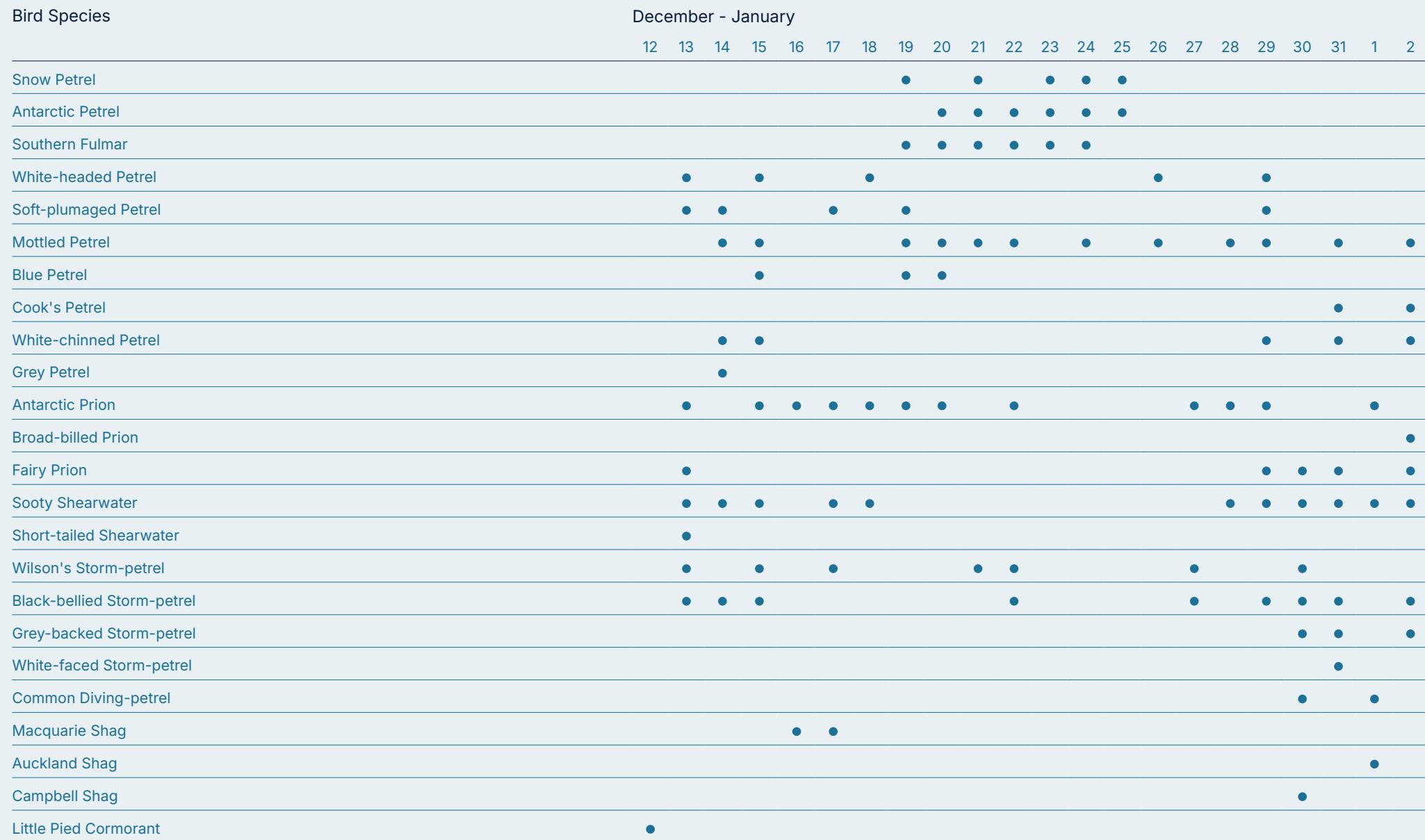


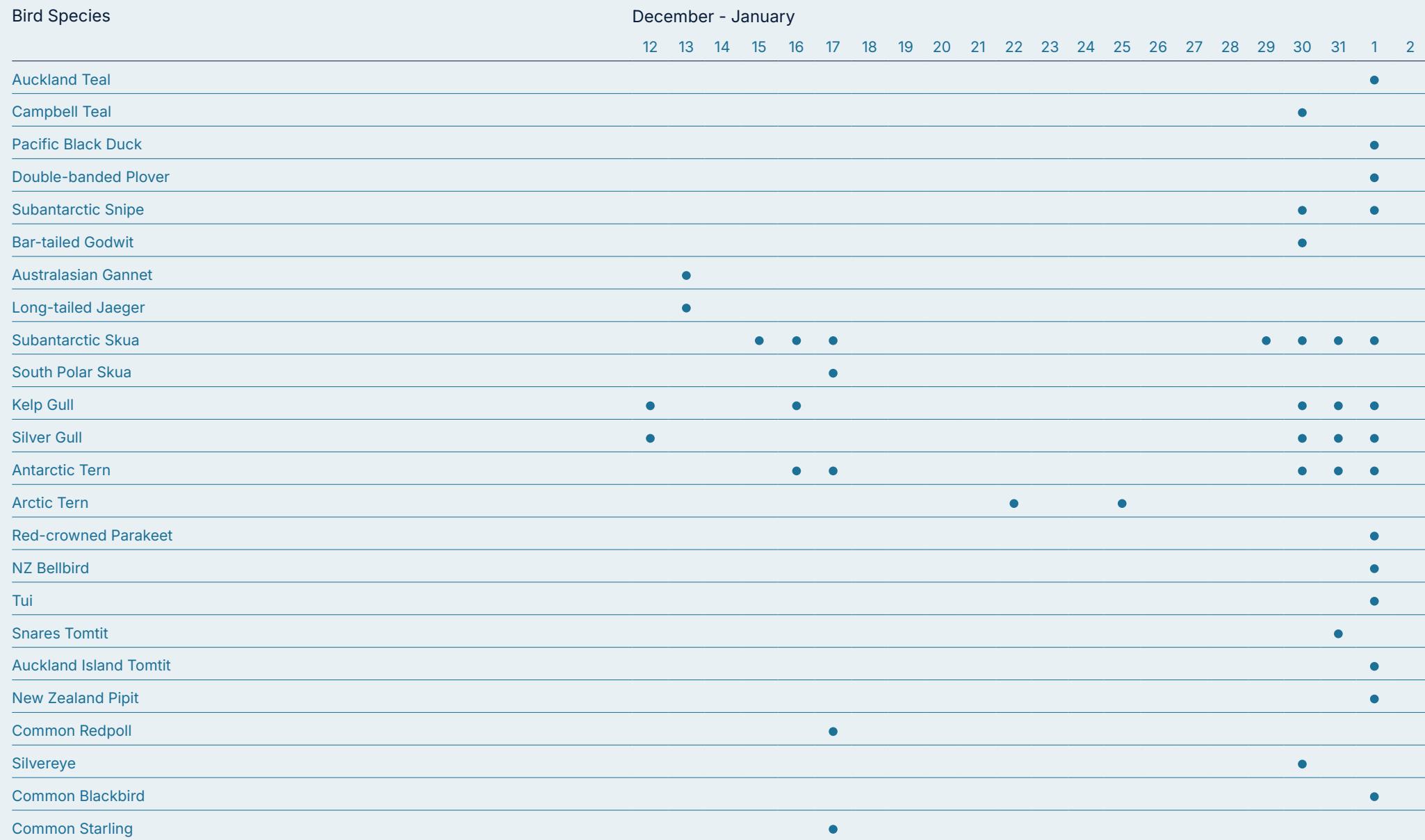




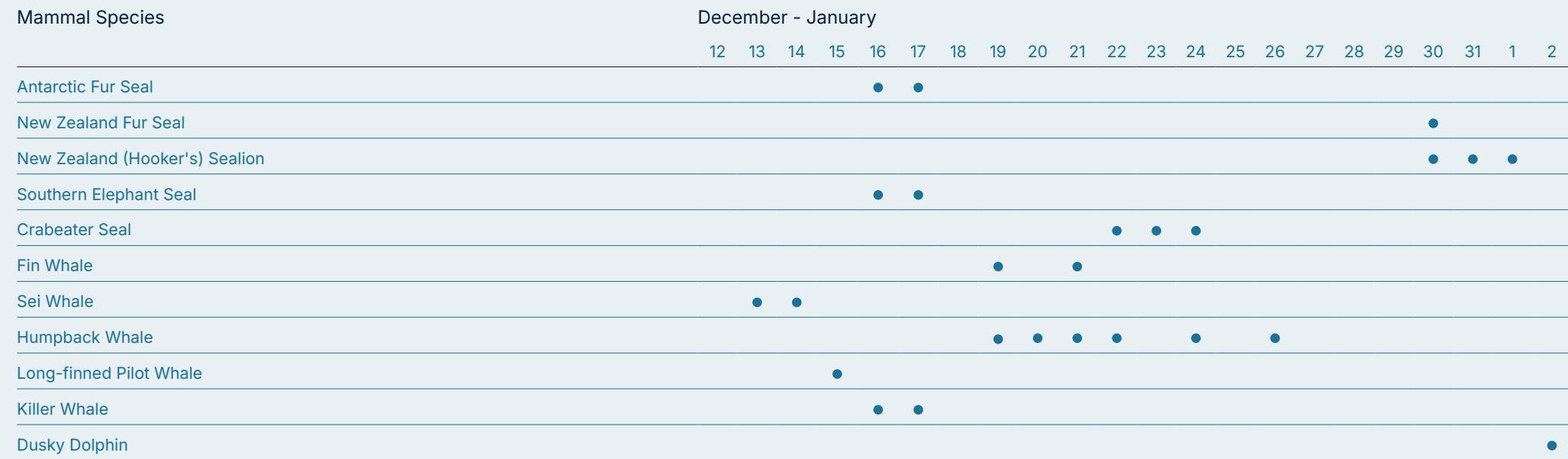
# Bird Sightings







# Mammal Sightings



# Map



## Mawson's Antarctica

12 December 2025 – 3 January 2026





# — Our Expeditioners

Bill Adler	Mick Duggan	Rod Howard	Mark Midwinter	Allen Renfrey	Christina Tonkin
Liz Aitken	Gayle Durante	Toby Howard	Sophia Minter	Lilo Rheinstein	Dale Trezise
Bo Au	Andrew Durante	Bronwyn Hull	Janet Moore	Maria Riedl	Leo Trigwell
Helena Baird	Joanne Adler Ellings	Roger Hunt	Diana Moore	Julia Robert	Jude Trigwell
Terry Brown	Donald Ettridge	Jude Hunter	Marg Moore	Kate Roberts	Jane Tynan
Angela Cadman	Bella Falk	Deborah Huth	Robert Morgan	Leanne Saccaro	Michael Tynan
Vicki Carland	Michael Fitzgerald	Timothy Johnson	Margaret Mortimer	Alan Saccaro	Wang Ruihong Wang
Sandy Chen	Minnie Gim	Helen Jones	Fenella Moyle	Charlotte Sainsbury	Therese Warren
Madonna Clements	Celia Grenning	Clyde Kakazu	Chris Moyle	Olaf Schuermann	Karenza Warren
Trevor Clues	Bev Guscott	Bede Kervin	Marion Murri	Phil Seager	Brenton Warren
Simon Cochran	David Hampson	Killer Killender	Kim Neuvar	Fiona Seager	Craig Watman
Bee Cochran	Robert Hayden	Dave Lawton	Georgie Ongley	Dirk Selderyk	Fred Watman
Lara Colrain	Jennifer Herrick	Pauline Lawton	Greg Pain	George Simpson	Lou Ann Watson
Wendy Commerford	John Hersee	Stephen Matheson	Debra Pankhurst	Glynn Sinclair	Lesley Wickham
Lorel Curry	Rory Hersee	David Matheson	Garry Pankhurst	Gill Slocum	Roxanne Wu
Bronwyn Dallow	Wendy Hickman	Katie Matheson	Shaun Patrick	David Stuart	Zhao Shengrong Zhao
Prit Das	Jo Hiscock	Felicity McAlpine	Jules Price	Shane Stuart	Mark Zimmerman
Sue De Vries	Judy Hodge	Emma McEwin	Herman Raadsma	Brett Sutherland	Ollie Zunk
John De Vries	Susan Hoevenaars	Jeannette McFarlane	Kaaren Rees	Pat Swallow	
Susan Dodds	Jane Hofto	Bill Middleditch	Gary Reeves	Grayham Taylor	

# Expedition Team

Expedition Leader: Greg Mortimer  
Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells  
Onboard Expedition Manager: Justine Bornholdt  
Shop Manager: Ari Benz Ciria  
Marine Biologist: Dani Abras  
Ornithologist & CS Coordinator: Heidi Krajewsky  
Ornithologist/Naturalist: Graeme (Snowy) Snow  
Naturalist: Lauren Farmer  
Climatologist/Naturalist: Katja Riedel  
Botanist/Naturalist: Joselyn Fenstermacher  
Historian: Jonathan Chester  
Geologist/Glaciologist: Alex Cowan  
Photography Guide: Jamie Lafferty  
Expedition Medic: Moniek Mestrom  
Expedition Guide: Stephen Anstee  
Alpine Guide: Davie Robinson  
Lead Kayak Guide: Daniel Stavert  
Kayak Guide: Liz MacNeil  
Zodiac Master: Ryan Kaempfe

# Senior Officers & Heads of Department

Master: Jorge Fernandez  
Ice Captain: Maxim Serkalev  
Staff Captain: Azelie Poret  
Second Officer: Ian Osorio Azocar  
Safety Officer: Sergey Abramov  
Ship Doctor: Alejandro Levin Viner  
Chief Engineer: Oleksandr Tsvietkov  
Staff Chief Engineer: Ivan Mitaki  
IT Officer: Ronaldo Jamero  
Hotel Director: Balvant Singh  
Head Bartender: Alan Fernandez  
Head Waiter: Allan Liscano  
Chief Purser: Caroline Pepenfuss  
Executive Chef: Pratik Ekoskar  
Sous Chef: Vinay Kumar  
Hotel Controller: William Ajes  
Receptionist: Johnny Valdez  
Receptionist: Jelyn Merilo  
Head Steward: Sotero Agtagma  
Bosun: Rey Genita  
Able Seaman: Talavera Christian  
Able Seaman: Jovito Sagusay  
Able Seaman: Rowell Motol  
Able Seaman: Adrian Bersabal  
Able Seaman: Jerome Castillo  
Able Seaman: Joby Cheruparambil

## Photography thanks to:

Jamie Lafferty





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