

Frozen Memories at the end of the World

BY ISAIAȘ MICU NICOLAEVICI



Shackleton Centenary Voyage

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- 1914 -
- 2014 -

ICE
TRACKS
EXPEDITIONS

Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute S.C.V. 2014.

A hundred years ago Sir Ernest Shackleton's hopes of traversing Antarctica evaporated when the Endurance caught in an icy grip finally sank leaving 28 men facing an appalling battle to survive on both sea and ice. On the opposite side of the continent the Ross Sea party were facing their own horrors. Their well-stocked ship, the SY Aurora, was torn from its moorings, taking with it most of their supplies. Unaware that the Endurance men were stranded, they resolutely scavenged enough provisions to lay depots for Shackleton's advancing party - a party that would never arrive. Their story remains as one of the greatest accounts of self-sacrifice in the annals of Polar history.

That the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917 failed to accomplish its objective, is a mere fleeting shadow. At the very heart of the expedition is the courage shown by its men, a heroism that continues to burn ever brighter in today's world.

Ice Tracks Expeditions had the challenging task of organizing the Shackleton Centenary voyage that was to spearhead three years of events honoring these men.

Two years of planning brought together for the first time on a voyage 10 descendants and relatives of the Endurance and Ross Sea Party. Sir Ernest Shackleton, Tim McCarthy, Arnold Spencer-Smith, Thomas Orde Hans Lees, Alexander Kerr, and Sir James Wordie were all represented, as was Hartley T Ferrar. (Discovery)

Special guests who joined this momentous voyage were:

Heather Lane, Librarian and Keeper of Collections. (SPRI)

Rear Admiral Nick Lambert, Chairman of the Friends of SPRI and former Commander of HMS Endurance.

Celene Pickard, Executive Secretary of Friends of SPRI.

Henry Worsley, the only man to have sledged-hauled both the Shackleton and Amundsen routes to the South Pole.

Each day had its high point. To name but a few, making landfall in King Haakon Bay, the church service in the Whaler's church in Grytviken, an on-board reception for Colin Roberts CVO, the Governor of the Falklands, the sight of Elephant Island before she disappeared in a blanket of mist.

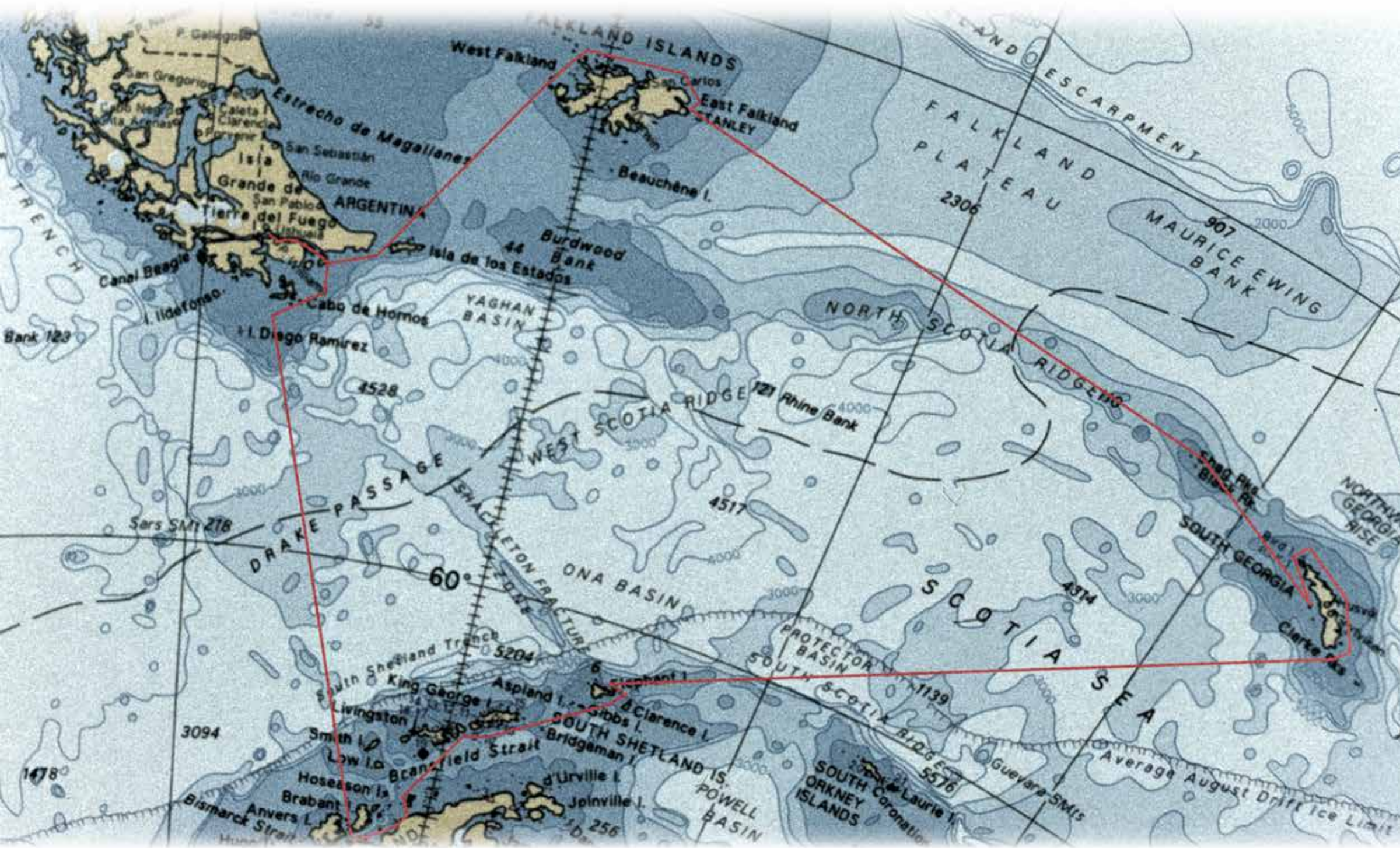
Yet, it was not only the descendants and special guests or the hard working crew of the Akademik Sergey Vavilov that added magic to the voyage. Everyone had a story to tell, personal stories that grew into a collective narrative. One that never lost sight of the achievements of 'the Boss' and his men, one that held in awe the ferocity of the Southern Ocean, the King penguin colony on Salisbury Plain, the splendor of the South Shetland Islands, the stillness of Paradise Bay, the heart-stopping beauty of Antarctica and much, much more.

This book serves as a memento for a voyage that can never be repeated.
Memories that will never be forgotten...Memories frozen in time...

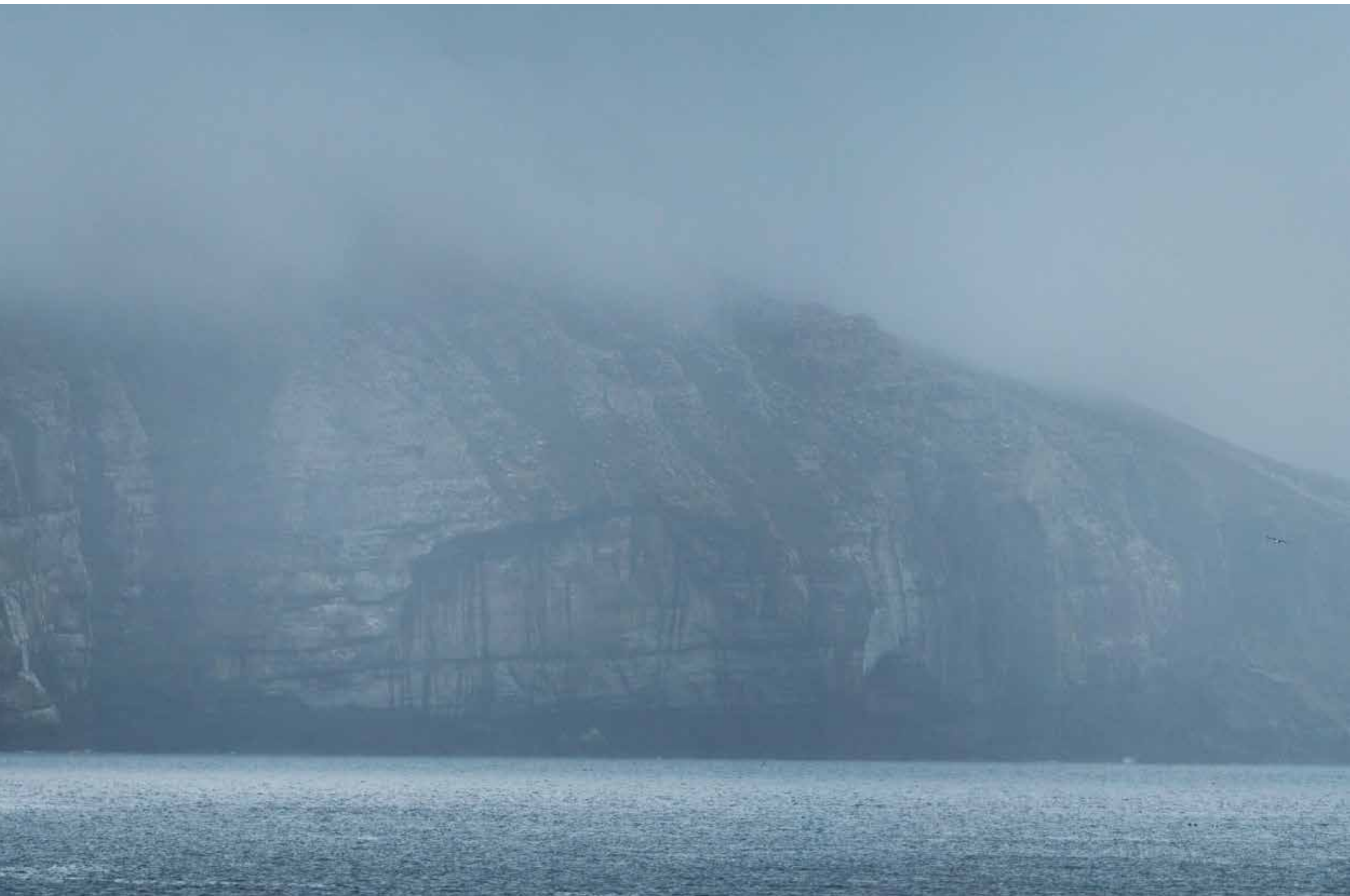
Ice Tracks Expeditions would like to thank each and every one of you who participated in this unique voyage.



Isaias Miciu Nicolaevici
PHOTOGRAPHY









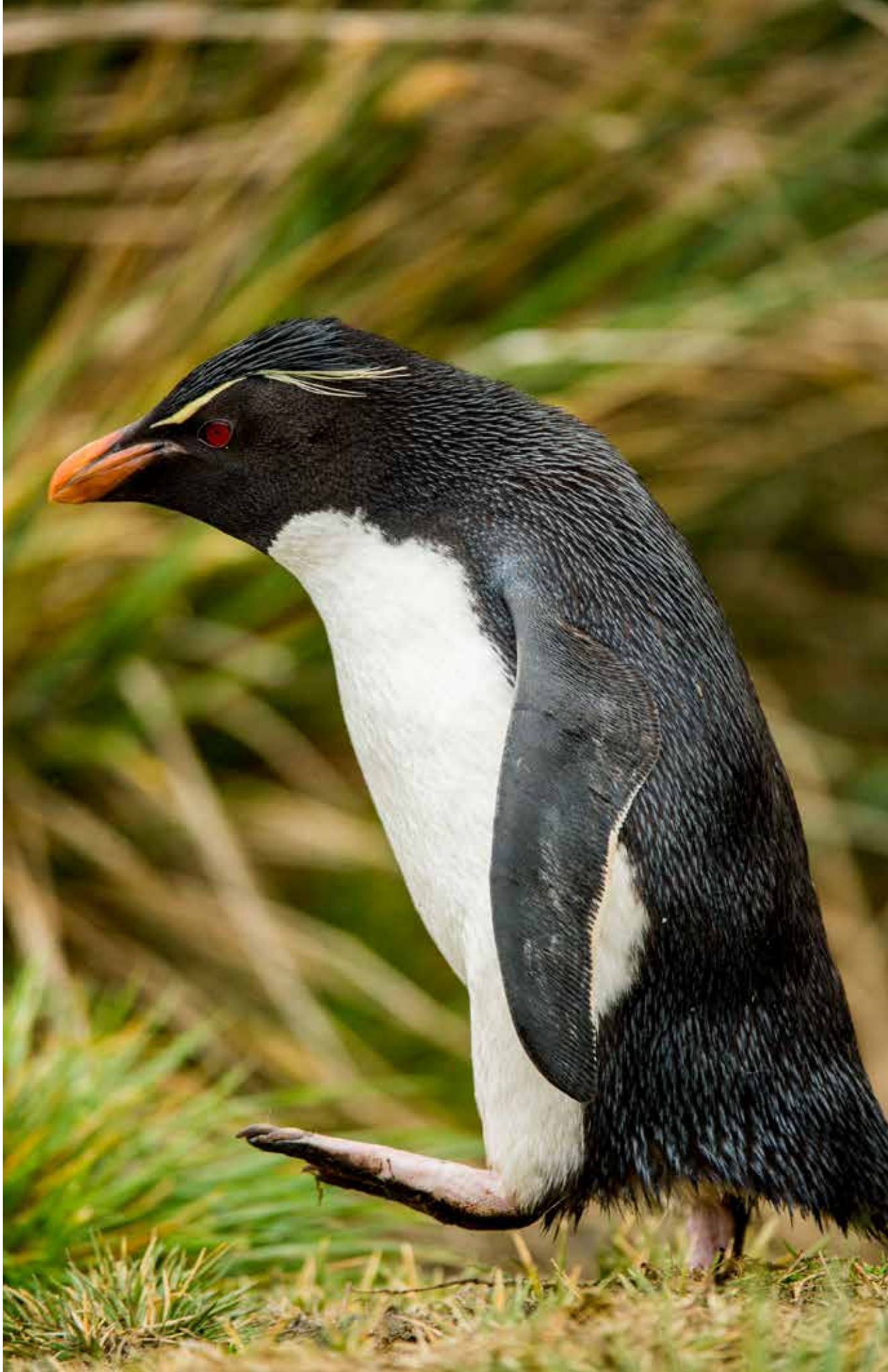
There are no native trees on the **Falkland Islands**. The natural vegetation includes a variety of grasses, shrubs, and low growing plants that rarely reach two meters. The European Gorse was introduced as a natural fencing for cattle and as a wind-break around farms in the mid 19th century. It is now spreading out of control and has become a potential fire hazard. Several grasses were introduced as forage for cattle and have slowly taken over and replaced native grasses around settlements.



Early settlers claimed that tussock grass used to cover the coasts of both East and West Falklands, upwards of 200 m from the coastline. Some small islands were completely covered by tussock. Tussock can grow up to 3.5 m high and it is long lived. Lately the tussock has, as many other grasses before it, been highly affected by grazing cattle. The lack of tussock has displaced soil, which has affected the coastline in several places. Re-plantation of tussock has started in many areas throughout the Falkland Islands.







Rockhopper penguins are one of the smallest species of penguin in the world. They range from 5 to 6 lb where males are larger than females. After reaching full growth they are about 20 inches in height. Males and females cannot be distinguished by looks alone.

Some characteristics that differentiate them from other penguins are their red eyes, orange beaks, pink webbed feet, and yellow and black spiky head feathers.









PORT STANLEY



Who named Port Stanley?

Stanley was named after Edward Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby who was the British Secretary of State for the colonies at the time the capital was founded. The Falklands became a permanent colony in 1840, established by the British government. The total land area is 4,700 sq. mi. and from east to west the broadest point is about 155km. The population of Stanley is around 2,700 and growing, most of whom are fueled by a hearty diet of fish and chips and proper pints of dark ale. Today, Stanley remains the service center for the island's wool industry, but has also become an important port for the deep water fishing industry. A potential oil boom promises further changes.



King Hakon Bay

On 10 May of 1916, when the storm had eased slightly, Shackleton was concerned that the weaker members of his crew would not last another day, and decided that whatever the hazard they must attempt a landing. They headed for Cave Cove near the entrance to King Haakon Bay, and finally, after several attempts, made their landing there. Shackleton was later to describe the boat journey as "one of supreme STRIFE"; historian Carol Alexander comments: "They could hardly have known -or cared- that in the carefully weighted judgement of authorities yet to come, the voyage of the James Caird would be ranked as one of the greatest boat journeys ever accomplished"

First image left: Alexandra Shackleton and Peter Mc Carthy.



Descendants and relatives of the Endurance and Ross Sea Party and all of us together commemorating those moments which made history...











Salisbury plain

Originally an airport was planned for this beach, but luckily it was never constructed, so now wildlife abounds on the broad plain. The gravel shore is littered with hulking masses of wallowing, snorting and sleeping southern elephant seals.

Every niche is crowded with fur seals - and where they leave room – king penguins (by the thousands).



The fledgling chicks with big brown puffy coats are between 8 – 9 months old.
This is the second largest king penguin colony on South Georgia. Grassy knolls that hide predators and seals surround the muddy alluvial plain











The Akademik Sergei Vavilov in Fortuna Bay

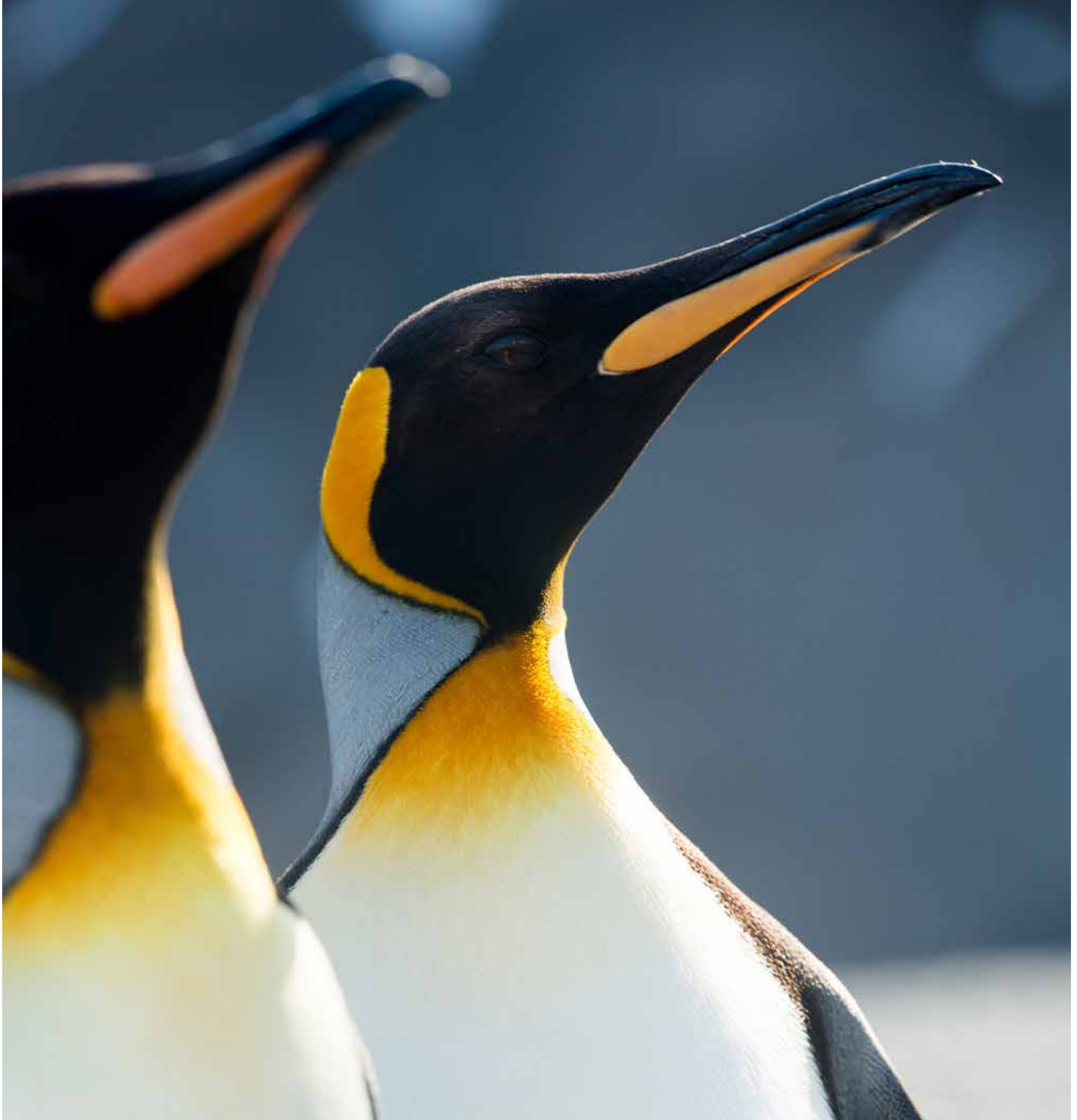


Named after the Fortuna, the first whaling ship to operate out of Grytviken in the early 1900's, **Fortuna Bay**, is a six km long fiord located between Robertson Point and Cape Best. The southern section of the western shore of Fortuna Bay is marked by a series of prominent scree ridges comprising of sedimentary sandstone and shale. These ridges lead up to Crean Lake and to the pass beyond which stands at a staggering 300 m above sea level. Over the pass we will be greeted with views down the Shackleton Valley, which is dominated by a braided gravel riverbed and beyond to Stromness.



The King penguin is the second largest penguin. Fully grown, they can grow up to three feet tall and weigh up to 30lbs with the males both taller and heavier. There is no denying the overall beauty of this particular penguin.

Their tall and slender build gives them a comical posture and unique waddle.





Shackleton, Tom Crean and Frank Worsley, arrived at Stromness whaling station after a grueling hike from King Haakon Bay. The first crossing of South Georgia was the last chapter of the Endurance expedition. This dramatic voyage of exploration is considered to be one of the greatest feats of human survival of the Heroic Age.

This is exactly the same view that gave so much hope and reward to those three heroes.



Still the same old abandoned building where Sir Ernest Shackleton knocked on the door of the whalers' chief that glorious day...









South Georgia was claimed for the British Crown by James Cook when he landed in a bay now known as Possession Bay on 17 January 1775 and “took possession of the Country in his Majesty’s name under discharge of small Arms”. This was “to the utter amazement of the seals and penguins, the inhabitants of these newly discovered dominions” wrote the expedition’s naturalist

George Foster. Cook was not much impressed with the place, writing that: “The inner parts of the Country was not less savage and horrible: the Wild rocks raised their lofty summits till they were lost in the Clouds and the Valleys laid buried in everlasting Snow. Not a tree or shrub was to be seen, no not even big enough to make a toothpick”. And there the matter stood with Britain showing no further interest in the Island until the late 19th Century. However, in 1892 it appeared that a Romanian, but long time resident of Argentina, Mr. Popper was interested in exploring the Island as a possible site for raising livestock. The British Colonial Office was not sure on what basis British sovereignty rested so, asked the Admiralty. The response was that the Admiralty had: “no intelligence” as to South Georgia “being considered British property, except that it was another place Captain Cook visited, but was not now considered British”.

A naval officer went further: famously remarking in 1892 that “no British man-of-war has visited South Georgia for many years, and I fail to see the object of their ever paying it another visit”. However, The Colonial Office felt it necessary to take account of Mr. Popper and requested a visit from a naval vessel. At this point Mr. Popper solved their problem by conveniently dropping dead, so a colonial office official was able to note in July 1893 that South Georgia: “disappears for the present into obscurity and ice”. This disinterest vanished in late 1904 with the coming of the whalers, and hence the opportunity to earn revenue for the Crown from issuing licenses, and in 1908 South Georgia was formally incorporated into the Falkland Islands Dependencies by “Letters Patent”.



This beautiful church was pre-built in Norway and erected in Grytviken by whalers led by Carl Anton Larsen around 1912-1913 and consecrated on Christmas Day 1913.

The church consists of a single nave leading to a small altar. A small library is attached to the side near the altar. Inside is furnished with simple wooden benches. A second floor is accessible from a staircase at the front entrance and it is here you are encouraged to ring the bell.

In 1922, a funeral service for Sir Ernest Shackleton was conducted in this church before his burial in the church cemetery.

Rear Admiral Nick Lambert takes the service attended by all the passengers in remembrance of the men of the Endurance and Ross Sea Party. The readings were written and read by the descendants and the hymns accompanied by a banjo and ukulele!

The cemetery is located approximately 2,300 ft from the church on the other side of Grytviken Harbour and it also holds empty graves for lost whalers at sea.



Shackleton's final resting place.

Shackleton was returned to Grytviken posthumously in 1922. He died suddenly from a heart attack whilst in South Georgia on the Quest expedition. His grave is with those of the whalers who died on the island and alongside his right-hand man, Frank Wild. Theirs are the only two graves facing South towards the Great Ice Barrier.







In 1904 C.A. Larsen arrived at Grytøyen to start what was to become an enormous industry - commercial whaling in the Southern Ocean. Subsequent to the establishment of **Grytøyen**, the British set up Stromness Harbour and Leith Harbour both of which were largely populated by Scots. Leith Harbour ultimately became the biggest whaling operation in the world, pre WW2. Bays such as Stromness and Cumberland were populated by large numbers of humpback and southern right whales, which were the first to be targeted and effectively exterminated.

Improvements in technology, including the development of factory ships, enabled the industry to expand into the Southern Ocean where a mass slaughter of blue, fin, humpback, southern right, sei and sperm whales took place.



After the Second World War, the main participants were the Soviet Union and Japan, the former killing whales indiscriminately to satisfy the 1 month / 1 year / 5 year economic plans. The Soviet Union continued whaling in the Southern Ocean until the mid 70's and only stopped because there were few whales to be found.



Southern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga leonina*) is the largest Pinniped in the world, slightly larger than their northern counterparts (Northern Elephant Seal); males can reach 16 feet in length and nearly 6,500 lbs. Dive to extreme depths 1.3 miles! Spend 90% of their time submerged with dive times ranging from 20 minutes to 2 hours. They are able to sleep during dives and their diet is fish and squid.





Elephant Island



Elephant Island is a mass of jutting rock in the Southern Ocean, just on the outer reaches of the South Shetland Islands and 779 miles west southwest of South Georgia . It is named by early explorers sighting elephant seals on its shores. The island is most famous as the refuge for the men of the ill-fated Endurance expedition. Leaving Frank Wild in charge, Shackleton took the “James Caird” life boat adapted by the carpenter, Harry McNish, and five men (including McNish) on a hazardous 800 mile journeys across the Weddell Sea to seek rescue in South Georgia. It is considered one of greatest feats of human navigation and fortitude in the history of sailing. Today, to land on Elephant Island is nigh impossible due to the enormous swell and rugged coast. But to watch it from the distance of a ship makes it no less unforgiving. Mostly covered in snow and fog, it is a chilling and bleak sight and begs the question... how did 22 men survive for four and half months on this forbidding island?









Meanwhile on board the Vavilov, life goes on. Sculptor, Janey, progresses with her portrait head of Shackleton. The bar fills with music and high jinx, while on the bridge Captain Beluga quietly navigates us through the ice, carefully planning every step ahead...







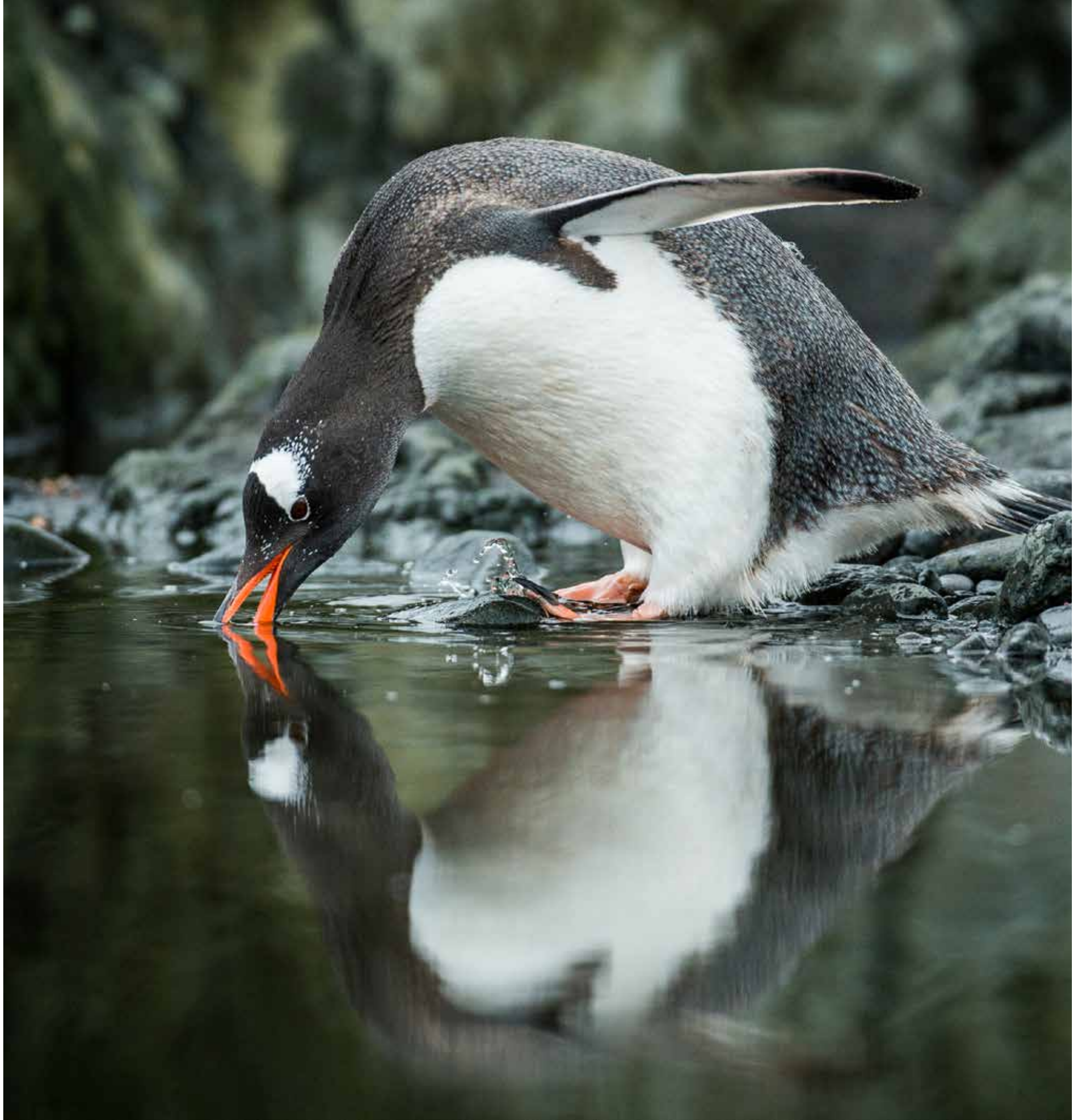


Excursion to Dorian Bay...



The unmistakable crescent-shaped white patch above the Gentoos' eyes, red bill and red feet make them especially attractive. Due to their variable diet of krill and fish their populations are expanding both in the Sub Antarctic and Antarctic regions. Gentoo penguins are mostly shallow divers.

Leopard Seals present a real danger. If caught they will be thrown around like a toy before being consumed. Gentoos return to their colonial breeding grounds building their nests with stones or in the case of South Georgia, grass. Unlike Adélies, their pair bond is strong and in November and December you will hear individuals calling for their mates to help defend the nest site and protect their eggs from Skuas.





















Warm as the sun-light...
Cold as the moon-light...











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