

West Point Island Falkland Islands

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browed albatross chick scratching its neck with enormous paddle like feet.

A black



Two rockhopper penguin chicks going through their moult from juvenile plumage to full adult feathers which will allow them to take to the sea.



A black-browed albatross chick and parent greet each other.

Weather forecasts indicated a storm heading in our direction, so we decided to seek sheltered waters. To make sure we could fit in at least one landing for the day we started early and landed on West Point Island at 8:30 a.m. Calm seas, a sunny sky and very little wind gave little indication of any rough weather approaching. We landed on a slipway and were met by several Land Rovers waiting to take anyone unable to hike to the “Devils Nose.” The rest of us did a one mile hike to the site where we could get close up to black browed albatross and rockhopper penguins. These two species often share breeding sites because they can have higher densities of birds in a small area, and the many beaks ready to attack makes predation from skuas and giant petrels much harder. The divers did their first dive of the trip. They stayed close to the bay as the wind appeared to be picking up. The site they dived had a macrosystic kelp forest and sandy bottoms which seemed to be supporting a really rich community.

After we were all back onboard, the ship steamed round to Carcass Island. This was supposed to be a second landing, but it was decided the weather was closing in quickly so a Zodiac was dropped to pick up some fresh lamb from the island and then the ship sailed to the northern part of West Falkland to try to seek some shelter from the winds approaching. Around 9:00 p.m. the winds came and we were very glad to be hiding in the lee of the land!

About the Author



Conor Ryan • Naturalist

Hailing from Cobh in the south of Ireland, Conor Ryan grew up on the shores of Cork Harbour where his fascination with the sea led him to study zoology at University College Cork. He continued his studies in marine biology in Galway, where he completed his Ph.D. thesis on the diet and population structure of baleen whales in the Celtic Sea using stable isotope analysis. His research also brought him to Cape Verde in search of the breeding grounds of humpback whales that frequent the coasts of Ireland. However these whales have not yet given up their secret!