

The Scotia Sea

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With wingspans that can reach up to 12 feet long, the wandering albatross can fly for hours at a time without flapping its wings. Photo by Jonathan Irish



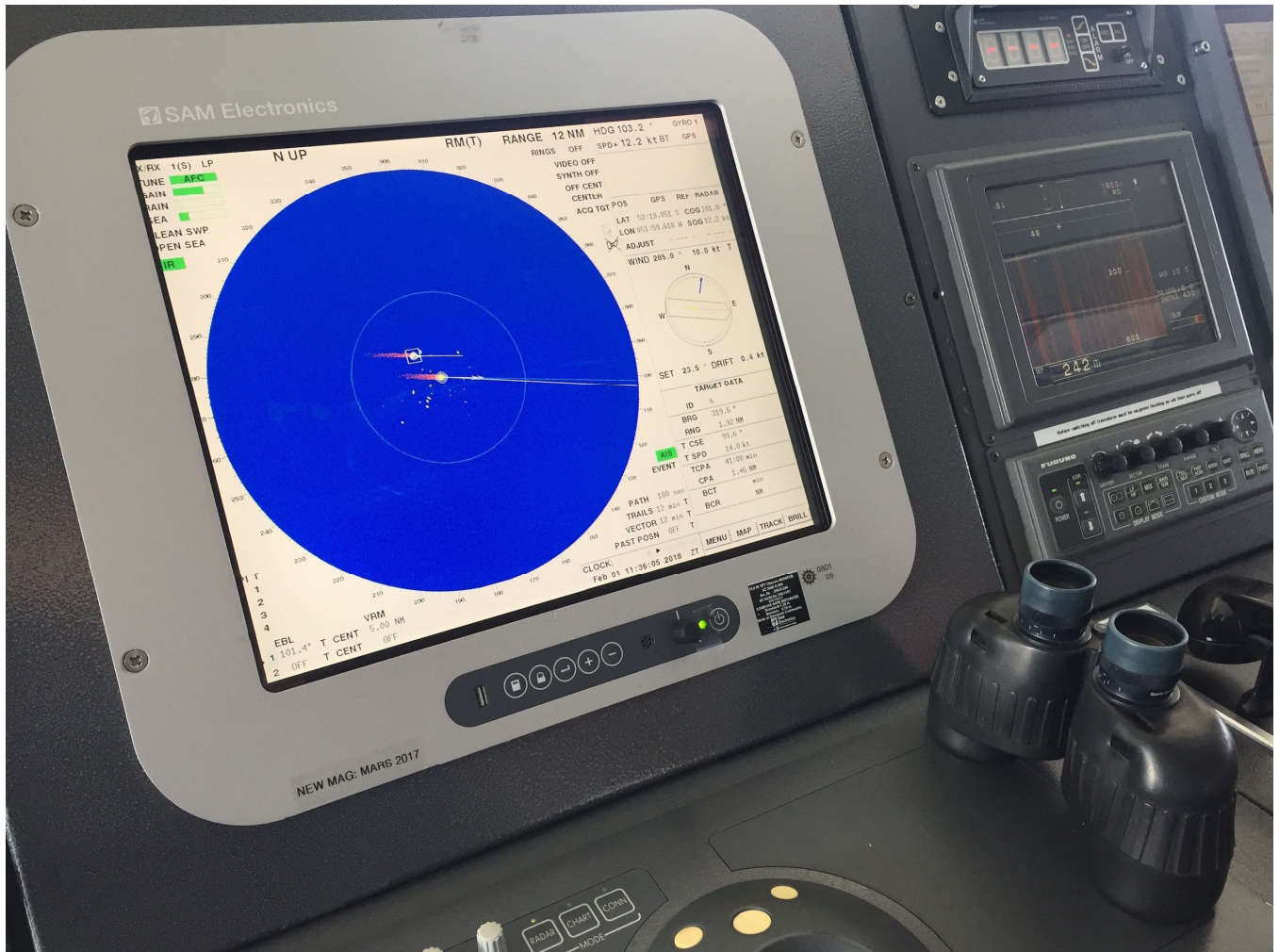
A southern giant petrel is silhouetted against the gentle swells of the Scotia Sea. Photo by Jonathan Irish



The chart mapping our progress from the Falkland Islands to South Georgia.



The calm swells of the Scotia Sea reflected in the windows of the ship are a stark contrast to the storm that just passed through the region the day before.



A view of the radar screen on the bridge of the ship, showing clear seas ahead in a vast ocean.

The gentle roll of the Scotia Sea was a welcome respite after what was one of the worst storms to hit the Falkland Islands in the previous 20+ years. That said, the *National Geographic Orion* handled the seas like a champion, under the expertise of the captain and officers of the ship. As we left the Falklands in our wake, we prepared for the journey that lay ahead. The day was spent learning about what and why so much megafauna is drawn to this place from our seasoned naturalists. We also spent a good deal of time learning about South Georgia, our next destination, and how important it is to keep it protected.

As the ship cut its way through the swells, we found ourselves escorted by some good omens in the form of wandering albatrosses. It's amazing to see how the largest flying bird can so effortlessly ride the currents of the wind, following the contours of the swells. The giant petrels soared among the wanderers, seeming to feel right at home out in the vastness of the open ocean.

About the Author



Robert Alexander· Naturalist/Expedition Diver

Robert Alexander has quenched his thirst for exploring the world's flora and fauna by captaining, interpreting natural history, and conducting research aboard ships. He particularly developed a passion for the marine life below the water's surface while attending the University of Oregon and becoming involved with their diving program. The rich waters of the Pacific Northwest led Robert to change career paths, and locales, as a SCUBA Instructor based primarily out of Maui. Utilizing any means of floating vessel, from kayaks and catamarans to small passenger boats and Zodiacs, Robert became a captain as he explored the behavioral patterns of the captivating marine megafauna throughout the world. In between being a captain and naturalist, he strives to conserve and preserve all forms of life- be it our very own species as a firefighter and EMT, assisting in shark-tagging projects for NOAA, or researching hawksbill turtle populations with the Hawaii Wildlife Fund.