

Flock to Marion AGAIN! 2025

24 – 31 January 2025

On-board Lecture Schedule



The BirdLife South Africa Expedition to our Southern Ocean Islands

to Marion AGAIN! 2025



Introduction:

BirdLife South Africa and MSC Cruises are thrilled to welcome you aboard the MSC Musica as we Flock to Marion AGAIN and sail down to the Prince Edward Islands. Marion Island is the larger of the two landmasses, though both this island and the neighbouring Prince Edward Island are important breeding sites for marine mammals and many seabird species. We are sure to see some of these exciting birds and marine mammals on our voyage, and we will have seabird and marine mammal experts positioned at various guiding stations around the ship to assist you with identification. We have sought the assistance of the world's leading experts, and they are eager to share their experience and knowledge with you.

For those willing to take a break from the decks, we have also structured a detailed lecture schedule featuring talks by several of the world's top conservationists, seabird experts, and marine mammal specialists. Our speakers will cover various facets of seabird and marine mammal biology, from their conservation and population status to their identification and biology. We guarantee that you will be enthralled!

Theatre 1: Teatro La Scala (Deck 6 Brillante / 7 Maestoso)

When: 09:00 (except on 27 and 28 Jan), **11:00** (except on 27 and 28 Jan), **14:00** (except on 27 and 28 Jan), and **19:30 daily** (except on 26 Jan).

Please note that the theatre's seating capacity is limited to 1123 people. Lectures are estimated to last about 45 minutes.

Theatre 2: Crystal Lounge (Deck 7 Maestoso)

When: 09:00 (except on 25 Jan), **11:00, 14:00 daily**

No lectures will take place in the Crystal Lounge on 27 and 28 Jan, and a lecture will take place in this lounge on 30 Jan at 17:00.

Please note that the theatre's seating capacity is limited to 298 people. Lectures are estimated to last about 45 minutes.

Please note that the programme is subject to change without prior notice. For the latest updates, kindly check the BirdLife South Africa information desk regularly while onboard. The daily and next day's lecture schedules will be displayed in elevators and on monitors.

Detailed Lecture Programme for 2 lecture theatres:

Friday 24 January 2025		
19:30	Theatre 1	Dr Anton Wolfaardt
		<p><i>Saving Marion Island's Seabirds. The Mouse-Free Marion Project</i></p> <p>Marion Island, the larger of the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands, is a critical breeding site for globally important seabird populations, including more than 25% of the world's Wandering Albatrosses. However, its ecosystem faces a severe threat from invasive House Mice, introduced inadvertently in the early 19th century. Climate change has intensified the mice's impacts, driving them to attack defenceless seabirds with devastating consequences. Without intervention, many of Marion Island's seabirds could face local extinction. Fortunately, advances in rodent eradication techniques offer hope. BirdLife South Africa and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment are leading an ambitious project to restore Marion Island and protect its wildlife. In this presentation, Anton, the Mouse-Free Marion Project Manager, will provide an overview of the ambitious project to eradicate mice from the island and reclaim it for its globally important seabirds and other wildlife.</p>
Saturday 25 January 2025		
09:00	Theatre 1	<p>Trevor Hardaker</p> <p><i>Seabird Photography</i></p> <p>Photographing seabirds at sea can be challenging for even the best of photographers. As with any subject, anticipating and creating powerful images requires a deep understanding of the subject's behaviour and environment. Seabirds are typically incredibly aerobic and fast-moving, covering immense distances in a single day. Their acrobatic flight pattern implies that they are either captured against a bright sky or against a dark sea, making exposure a challenge. Moreover, most pelagic bird photography is handheld, and even if the subject is stationary beside a boat, the photographer is almost constantly moving. In this lecture, Trevor will share some insight into how to overcome these and other challenges based on years of observing and photographing seabirds on pelagics out of Cape Town and elsewhere.</p>
11:00	Theatre 1	<p>Peter Harrison MBE</p> <p><i>Ocean Nomads: The Albatrosses</i></p> <p>Largest of all flying birds with lifespans that match those of humans, the 22 albatross species are the most itinerant of all life forms, capable of flying more than 1,000 miles a day and over 8.5 million miles in their lifetimes. Some species circumnavigate the Earth several times in a single year. Other species will spend up to 10 years at sea, flying over 2 million miles before returning to land. 18 of the 22 species of albatross are found in the Southern Ocean—the windiest and stormiest ocean on Earth. Join Peter as he shares his awe and wonderment for his favourite of all seabirds, the albatrosses of the world. In this lecture, he will discuss species identification, what makes an albatross so unique, and the fascinating biology of these ocean nomads—truly one of the greatest survival stories in the world of natural history.</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>Dr Liezl Pretorius and Leandri de Kock</p> <p><i>Life in the Roaring Forties</i></p> <p>Have you ever wondered what it's like to spend a year on Marion Island? What would you pack, and how would you stay connected with the outside world? Join recent islanders Liezl and Leandri as they guide you through the unique experience of life on Marion Island. In their talk, they'll take you on a virtual tour of the base, introduce you to hut life, showcase the essential field gear, and even share some creative island recipes. You'll also learn about the various roles and responsibilities that keep life running on the island. Additionally, Liezl will share highlights from a rare 2023 expedition to the very seldom visited Prince Edward Island, offering a glimpse into one of the world's most remote natural landscapes.</p>
14:00	Theatre 1	<p>Prof. Peter Ryan</p> <p><i>Life on the ocean wave - how pelagic seabirds make their living</i></p> <p>Seabirds have numerous adaptations to a life at sea. Truly pelagic species, such as albatrosses and petrels, only come ashore to breed; young birds stay at sea for several years. This talk will highlight some of the fascinating ways in which seabirds have evolved to function in this often seemingly inhospitable environment. Topics covered will include how seabirds find food, how they cope with a diet rich in salt, how they use their mobility to take advantage of predictable seasonal patterns in the ocean as well as short-term extreme weather events, and how they manage to raise a family despite having to travel large distances to find food.</p>

	Theatre 2	<p>Ian Bloxam</p> <p><i>A Ship, 2 Greek Myths and 3 Celestial Birds</i></p> <p>Come on a journey into the depths of the Southern Night Sky. Discover the history and mythologies of the Constellation Argo Navis – Jason and the Argonauts voyage to find the Golden Fleece. Find out how to identify the Southern Celestial Birds (lifers for your Galactic list) – Pavo, Grus, Tucana and Phoenix. Become confident in telling the difference between the Southern Cross and the False Cross and how to determine the Cardinal Marker – SOUTH.</p> <p>Use this opportunity to make the most of some of the darkest night skies you will ever see at 47°S in the Southern Ocean.</p>
15:00	Theatre 2	<p>Peter Harrison MBE (In attendance with Martin Perrow and Hans Larsson)</p> <p>Book signing: <i>SEABIRDS: The New Identification Guide</i></p> <p>Prof. Peter Ryan</p> <p>Book signing: <i>Guide to SEABIRDS of Southern Africa (New Edition)</i></p>
17:00	Theatre 2	<p>Dr Stuart Butchart</p> <p>Reflections on Life and Conservation</p> <p><i>(Exclusive to BirdLife South Africa's Conservation League Donors)</i></p>
19:30	Theatre 1	<p>Martin Perrow</p> <p><i>The Adventures of Tern Boy: a personal odyssey of tern research, conservation and experiences</i></p> <p>Terns are beautiful and extraordinary, one of the few bird groups to breed on all continents and exploit all aquatic habitats. Yet, many terns are suffering from a plethora of threats including human disturbance, overfishing, offshore wind farms and adaptable predators, and are in dire need of conservation based on a thorough understanding of their requirements. Here, Martin recounts his often innovative research experiences with the 'big 5' in the UK and Ireland that are of relevance to other species across the planet and his ongoing quest to see and understand them all. Expect pictures!</p>

Sunday 26 January 2025		
09:00	Theatre 1	<p>Prof. Peter Ryan</p> <p><i>Prince Edward - one of the world's most pristine sub-Antarctic islands</i></p> <p>Marion Island, the larger of the two Prince Edward Islands, has had a weather station since 1948. Since the 1950s and 1960s, research has been conducted on geology and biota, making Marion one of South Africa's best-studied ecosystems. Much less is known about nearby Prince Edward Island. Although both islands were exploited by land-based sealing parties, Prince Edward emerged with much fewer human impacts; there are only a few introduced plants and there have never been any introduced mammals. In order to conserve its near-pristine status, visits are now very strictly controlled, with no more than one visit every 5 years. This talk will highlight why it is such a special island.</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>Kitty Harvill</p> <p><i>Painting with Purpose: ART in the Service of Conservation</i></p> <p>"A picture is worth a thousand words". If it is, indeed, true, then what better than to use artwork to raise awareness for conservation issues. As in all times of turmoil and chaos, humans have turned to our artists...to raise awareness and touch the hearts and minds in ways that go beyond words. The ability and passion to work for environmental change through the medium of artistic expression is the subject of this lecture. Sharing artworks created by ABUN - Artists & Biologists Unite for Nature in the last five years in support of World Albatross Day, including posters and videos as well as other projects, we will explore visual works used as a 'Call to Action'.</p>
11:00	Theatre 1	<p>Peter Harrison MBE</p> <p><i>Ocean Nomads: The Albatrosses (repeat)</i></p> <p>Largest of all flying birds with lifespans that match those of humans, the 22 albatross species are the most itinerant of all life forms, capable of flying more than 1,000 miles a day and over 8.5 million miles in their lifetimes. Some species circumnavigate the Earth several times in a single year. Other species will spend up to 10 years at sea, flying over 2 million miles before returning to land. 18 of the 22 species of albatross are found in the Southern Ocean—the windiest and stormiest ocean on Earth. Join Peter as he shares his awe and wonderment for his favourite of all seabirds, the albatrosses of the world. In this lecture, he will discuss species identification, what makes an albatross so unique, and the fascinating biology of these ocean nomads—truly one of the greatest survival stories in the world of natural history.</p>

	Theatre 2	<p>Nandi Thobela and Ian Davies</p> <p><i>Bridging Cultures Through Language: The South African Names for South African Birds Project</i> The South African Names for South African Birds (SANSAB) project represents an innovative initiative to document bird names in all 11 official languages of South Africa. Although still in its infancy, SANSAB is built on a long history of linguistic and cultural appreciation, with the recent completion of isiZulu bird names marking a significant milestone. This achievement has catalysed impactful partnerships and inspired collaborative efforts among linguists, ornithologists, and cultural stakeholders. Through its participatory approach, SANSAB seeks to honour linguistic diversity, foster cultural identity, and promote inclusivity in ornithological discourse. This presentation will explore the project's progress, challenges, and aspirations, emphasising its potential to shape a more inclusive understanding of South African avifauna and its cultural significance.</p> <p><i>Merlin Bird ID and eBird collaborations with BirdLife South Africa and the African Bird Atlas Project</i> The Cornell Lab of Ornithology team will follow up on Nandi Thobela's discussion of exciting new developments of an isiZulu field guide through the Merlin Bird ID app, as well as exciting new collaborations between eBird and the African Bird Atlas Project, resulting in more than a million new bird observations being available in the SABAP2 project as well as other atlases across Africa. Learn about how your birding is helping people and birds and how eBird and Merlin might be able to make your birding even more fun and rewarding.</p>
14:00	Theatre 1	<p>Keith Springer</p> <p><i>Island restoration: saving native species one island at a time</i> Eradication of invasive species has enabled restoration of island ecosystems around the world. In this talk, the Mouse-Free Marion Project's Operations Manager Keith Springer outlines the eradication of pest species from a select group of islands, including Macquarie, Lord Howe and South Georgia, and the resulting recovery in biodiversity.</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>John Kinghorn and Andrew Whysall</p> <p><i>Getting Closer to Nature – Birding Around the World with Swarovski Optik</i> Join us for a short video and an inspiring talk as we explore the wonders of birding across the globe, brought to you in collaboration with Swarovski Optik. Discover the brand's journey and development over the years, the best ways to connect with nature, enhance your birdwatching experience and unlock the beauty of wildlife through the lens of cutting-edge optics. Whether you're a seasoned birder or just starting your journey, this session will open your eyes to a world of incredible birds, breathtaking landscapes, and industry-leading optics. Don't miss this opportunity to get closer to nature with Swarovski Optik!</p>
17:00	Theatre 2	<p>BirdLife South Africa Supporter Event</p> <p><i>(Exclusive to BirdLife South Africa's Golden Bird Patrons, donors and board members – by invitation only)</i></p>
18:00	Deck 6 & 7	Penguin Party

Monday 27 January 2025		
19:30	Theatre 1	<p>Dr Anton Wolfaardt</p> <p><i>Saving Marion Island's Seabirds. The Mouse-Free Marion Project (repeat)</i> Marion Island, the larger of the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands, is a critical breeding site for globally important seabird populations, including more than 25% of the world's Wandering Albatrosses. However, its ecosystem faces a severe threat from invasive House Mice, introduced inadvertently in the early 19th century. Climate change has intensified the mice's impacts, driving them to attack defenceless seabirds with devastating consequences. Without intervention, many of Marion Island's seabirds could face local extinction. Fortunately, advances in rodent eradication techniques offer hope. BirdLife South Africa and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment are leading an ambitious project to restore Marion Island and protect its wildlife. In this presentation, Anton, the Mouse-Free Marion Project Manager, will provide an overview of the ambitious project to eradicate mice from the island and reclaim it for its globally important seabirds and other wildlife.</p>

Tuesday 28 January 2025		
19:30	Theatre 1	Brett de Groott
		<p>Call of the Wild - Film Screening Are you listening carefully? To describe an African sunset without ever seeing one is virtually impossible. How does one encapsulate the majesty of a herd of elephant, or the prowess of a lion drinking from a watering hole? So much of the safari experience is visual because of the vivid imagery of the African bush. However, it's not often that we think about what this experience would be like for someone who cannot see. This uniquely designed, groundbreaking and award-winning documentary - for both able-sighted and visually impaired audience members- explores this very notion by pairing Anika, a visually impaired child with a knack for bird calls, with an extraordinary innovation in bush safari experiences engineered by soundscape specialists Derek and Sarah Solomon. In so doing, sound in all its profundity is unpacked- from the intricacies of the sounds we hear in the bush and what they mean, to the way in which sound can bring blind people closer to nature than we ever deemed possible; come eavesdrop on the wild as Anika ventures on her very first sound safari and explores nature's expanse through sound alone- truly experiencing the Call of the Wild.</p>

Wednesday 29 January 2025		
09:00	Theatre 1	<p>Dr Alistair McInnes Seabird sentinels of the Benguela Upwelling Ecosystem Seabirds endemic to the Benguela Upwelling Ecosystem have undergone worrying declines since the turn of the century. This talk will explore common and priority threats to three of the seven most threatened Benguela seabird endemics, the African Penguin, Cape Cormorant and Cape Gannet, who share an important ecological connection and who can provide important insights into the health of this marine ecosystem.</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>Danielle Keys Birds, Beacons, and the Wild Unknown: Uncovering Seabird Secrets on Marion Island Spending two overwintering seasons as a birder on the remote Marion Island has been a life-changing journey. Ever since hearing about this pristine, untouched environment, Danielle knew she had to experience it. Her first season was dedicated to tracking seabirds across the island, using GPS loggers to uncover their at-sea movements, assess the threats they face, and monitor chick growth. The second season—the "COVID expedition"—focused on maintaining critical long-term monitoring programs to understand how these species respond to a changing environment. Observing seabirds up close in a place where they remain fearless of humans has reinforced, for her, the urgent need to protect these rare and extraordinary habitats.</p>
11:00	Theatre 1	<p>Peter Harrison MBE The World of Seabirds Peter Harrison's life has been an epic adventure of research and travel across the oceans and seas of the world to study seabirds, birds that live where all others can't—the open ocean. As one of the world's leading seabird ornithologists, Peter has seen more seabirds than anyone on the planet—all but one of the world's 434 seabird species. Join Peter as he shares an exciting story of exploration and discovery, science and art, that evolved over his many years dedicated to researching, writing about, illustrating, and protecting seabirds, that culminated in his latest book, the award-winning <i>SEABIRDS: The New Identification Guide</i>. Perfect for seasoned pelagic birders as well as those who are new to the joys of seabirding, Peter's inspiring talk will describe the fascinating lives of seabirds along with efforts to protect their ocean home.</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>Dr Daniel Danckwerts Madagascar: Wildlife of a Magical Island Madagascar, often referred to as the "eighth continent," boasts a staggering array of endemic wildlife and plant species found nowhere else on Earth. This lecture explores the island's evolutionary marvels, from its iconic lemurs and endemic birds to its diverse habitats spanning lush rainforests, dry spiny forests, and surreal baobab landscapes. Highlighting the biological and ecological uniqueness of this magical island, Dan will also address the significant conservation challenges Madagascar faces, including habitat loss and species endangerment. With an emphasis on its fragile beauty, this presentation underscores the urgency of both preserving Madagascar's treasures and experiencing its wonders firsthand.</p>

14:00	Theatre 1	<p>Andrea Angel and Reason Nyengera</p> <p><i>The Albatross Task Force: seabird bycatch challenges and how electronic monitoring will help ensure compliance with mitigation.</i></p> <p>Seabird bycatch is the most pervasive conservation challenge faced by albatrosses and other pelagic seabirds foraging off the coast of South Africa and globally. While solutions exist, broadscale implementation of mitigation measures is challenging, as is ensuring these measures are used at sea, where no one is watching. Our work with industry, government and partners to research innovative compliance tools and adapt existing mitigation measures is, however, paying off as we are one step closer to our goal of ensuring fishing vessels in South Africa do not kill albatrosses and other seabirds. As local and regional efforts towards more sustainable fisheries grow, sustaining hard-earned bycatch reductions is key.</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>Toby Carter</p> <p><i>Conservation through the lens – ZEISS</i></p> <p>Find out how ZEISS products across the globe are helping to conserve the wildlife on this planet, from using trail cameras to monitor breeding raptors to donations of equipment to help inspire and conserve the next generation of nature enthusiasts.</p>
17:00	Theatre 2	<p>Mouse-Free Marion Event</p> <p><i>(Exclusive event – by invitation only)</i></p>
19:30	Theatre 1	<p>Dr Stuart Butchart</p> <p><i>State of the World's Birds (with a particular focus on seabirds)</i></p> <p>Birds act as an effective barometer for the health of our planet. In this presentation, Stuart will review what birds tell us about the state of the natural world, the pressures upon it, and the solutions in place and needed. He will shine a spotlight, in particular, on seabirds. One in eight bird species is threatened with extinction, and the status of the world's birds continues to deteriorate. The principal threats causing these losses include agricultural expansion and intensification, unsustainable logging, invasive alien species, overexploitation, climate change, and for seabirds, unsustainable fisheries. Fortunately, we know what actions are needed to help nature recover, and birds show us that conservation action works. However, time is running out.</p>

Thursday 30 January 2025		
09:00	Theatre 1	<p>Hadoram Shirihai</p> <p><i>Targeting and tracking the rarest gadflies of the Southern Ocean - the Magenta and the Chatham Petrels</i></p> <p>There are 37 petrel species in the genus <i>Pterodroma</i>, known as Gadfly Petrels. As part of a long-term field research project for the upcoming book "Shirihai, H. & Bretagnolle, V. in prep. <i>The Gadfly Petrels, Volume 1: Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World: A Handbook to their Taxonomy, Identification, Ecology and Conservation. Christopher Helm, London.</i>", Hadoram has studied all 37 species at sea. The most challenging and time-consuming were the Magenta and the Chatham Petrels, which required 25 years of numerous expeditions. The success in studying these species at sea also signifies the positive impact of conservation efforts on islands. Hadoram will present a parallel population trend recovery of these still highly endangered petrels, while also demonstrating that the rediscovery of a lost or presumed-extinct petrel can ultimately save it through long-term recovery management. The lecture will feature images of many species, including those that hadoram rediscovered, along with tips for extreme oceanic bird enthusiasts, including a new and improved chum recipe demonstrated by Dr Frank Zino (of the Zino's Petrel).</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>John Cooper</p> <p><i>The Human History of the Prince Edward Islands - a Conservation Perspective</i></p> <p>Starting with the discovery and the first visits to the Prince Edward Islands and continuing to the current day, John will detail the island's human history. From first landings, exploitation of wildlife, annexation and occupation, the commencement and development of natural research programmes and most latterly, domestic and international conservation efforts, he will cover two centuries of human involvement with South Africa's sub-Antarctic islands -and only overseas possessions. There have been both disappointments and successes in improving the islands' conservation status, with the greatest challenge yet to come – the eradication of Marion's "killer" House Mice that are attacking the island's iconic Wandering Albatrosses and other seabirds.</p>

11:00	Theatre 1	<p>Peter Harrison MBE <i>The World of Seabirds (repeat)</i> Peter Harrison's life has been an epic adventure of research and travel across the oceans and seas of the world to study seabirds, birds that live where all others can't—the open ocean. As one of the world's leading seabird ornithologists, Peter has seen more seabirds than anyone on the planet—all but one of the world's 434 seabird species. Join Peter as he shares an exciting story of exploration and discovery, science and art, that evolved over his many years dedicated to researching, writing about, illustrating, and protecting seabirds, that culminated in his latest book, the award-winning <i>SEABIRDS: The New Identification Guide</i>. Perfect for seasoned pelagic birders as well as those who are new to the joys of seabirding, Peter's inspiring talk will describe the fascinating lives of seabirds along with efforts to protect their ocean home.</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>Prof. Peter Ryan <i>Emperors and Ice - deep field tourism in Queen Maud Land</i> Despite a rapid increase in tourism to Antarctica over the last 20 years, barely 120,000 people will visit the continent in the 2024/25 season. Most will go by ship, crossing the notorious Drake Passage to reach the Antarctic Peninsula. Fewer than 1000 tourists venture into the interior of the continent each year. One so-called deep field operator piggybacks their tours onto existing flights supporting national research programmes in Queen Maud Land, greatly reducing their carbon footprint. This talk highlights what you might see on a short trip to the continent from Cape Town. There are not many birds on offer, but it's virtually the only way to visit an Emperor Penguin colony during early summer.</p>
14:00	Theatre 1	<p>Christina Hagen <i>De Hoop for Penguins: Establishing a new breeding colony of African Penguins</i> Christina Hagen, the Pamela Isdell Fellow of Penguin Conservation at BirdLife South Africa, will give a presentation on her work to establish an African Penguin breeding colony at the De Hoop Nature Reserve. She will share the long journey of how the project came to be, why De Hoop was chosen and what preparations have been made to make the site suitable for penguins. She will share the successes and challenges faced by the project and what we hope to achieve.</p>
	Theatre 2	<p>Dr Vishal Surbun <i>Who controls the ocean and its resources? The legal framework under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea</i> When any political map of the world is viewed, it is easy to see the depictions of boundaries of states on continental landmasses and islands. However, on the same map, the oceans are simply coloured in blue, without any boundaries. Accordingly, who controls the ocean realm? Who owns its resources? Who is responsible for conserving the natural marine environment? In the 1970s, the United Nations convened a conference on the law of the sea to create one comprehensive 'constitution' for the oceans. After a decade of negotiations, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was adopted. The lecture provides an overview of how UNCLOS divides the ocean into various zones and addresses these fundamental questions. It tackles the questions of what states can control in the oceans (jurisdiction) and own (sovereign rights). The lecture then considers South Africa's unique maritime territory and jurisdiction in the Southern Indian Ocean held due to its sovereignty over the Prince Edward Islands. Finally, the lecture outlines the responsibilities of states under UNCLOS to protect and conserve marine living resources.</p>
17:00	Theatre 2	<p>Roger Machin <i>Canon products for birders</i> Roger Machin will present a short talk on Canon's product lineup for birders and answer questions about the best cameras and lenses for birding. He will also present some of his learnings from using many of the products himself.</p>
19:30	Theatre 1	Closing Function: Mouse-Free Marion Live Auction and Lucky Draws

For more information, please consult BirdLife South Africa's information desk on Deck 6 (Brillante) by the Excursion Desk.

Introducing our speakers:



Andrea Angel

Andrea Angel is the Albatross Task Force Manager and part of the Seabird Conservation Programme at BirdLife South Africa. Her work focuses on mitigating at-sea threats to seabirds through research and development of innovative mitigation measures and approaches while advocating for sustainable fishing practices as part of a global conservation initiative. She has worked on seabird management and conservation issues for the past 18 years, having spent time on seabird breeding islands, including a year on Gough Island, and is passionate about the conservation of Albatrosses.



Ian Bloxam

Ian Bloxam has been an amateur astronomer since 1986 when he realised that if he wanted to see Halley's Comet in the Constellation Pegasus, he should learn how to find Pegasus in the night sky. He is a keen birder with a southern African list of over 700 species. He has given presentations over the years on "Navigating the Southern Summer Night Skies for beginners," "Bird Related Celestial Objects," and "The Next Time Machine—from Hubble to the James Webb Space Telescope." He spends three months in Greece each year, which awakened his interest in Greek Mythology.



Dr Stuart Butchart

Stuart Butchart is Chief Scientist at BirdLife International, leading BirdLife's Science Division, which develops and manages BirdLife's global scientific datasets and undertakes research underpinning BirdLife's Conservation Programmes. He has worked on assessing the extinction risk of the world's birds for the IUCN Red List, launching BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions Programme, developing biodiversity indicators (including the Red List Index), establishing the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership, and was part of the team leading the first Global Assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. He has published widely on the state of the world's birds, their threats, the solutions required, and the impact of conservation.



Toby Carter

Toby Carter is a keen birder who's been hooked not only onto feathered creatures that we all love but also all other forms of nature. Ever since the tender age of 5 years, he's had a pair of binoculars dangling from his neck, traveling to various places in his search for birds and a diverse array of other wildlife. Toby has been a part of the ZEISS optics family for several years, initially as an ambassador while still at university and studying toward a degree in Environmental Conservation. In 2022, Toby became their Business Development Executive for Nature in the United Kingdom and now manages and assists with the brand's social media content, and various promotions and campaigns.



John Cooper

John Cooper is a retired biologist and the volunteer News Correspondent for the Mouse-Free Marion Project. He has a long experience of Marion Island, having made 31 visits between 1978 and 2014, as well as four research trips to the uninhabited and mouse-free Prince Edward Island. He set up several of the long-term seabird monitoring studies on Marion Island in the 1980s and was active in motivating for and improving the island's domestic and international conservation status. In retirement, he co-founded and led for a decade the Antarctic Legacy of South Africa project that delved into the islands' human history, uncovering many little-known and sometimes unusual facts.



Dr Daniel Danckwerts

Daniel Danckwerts is an accomplished ornithologist who spent nearly a decade researching tropical seabirds, using Réunion Island as a base to explore the stunning Indian Ocean archipelago. His PhD focused on the genetic structure of seabird populations, providing valuable insights into their conservation and ecology. After completing his doctorate, Daniel joined Rockjumper Worldwide Birding Adventures as a full-time tour leader, a role that has taken him to over 40 destinations, with a focus on Africa and Asia and expeditions to both Antarctica and the Arctic. Currently serving as the Tailor-Made Tours Manager, Daniel continues to travel extensively, combining his expertise with a deep passion for bird conservation. He takes great pleasure in sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for birds with others, inspiring a love for nature and avian life wherever he goes.



Ian Davies

Ian Davies works at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology as the eBird International Strategy Lead, where he develops and coordinates global partnerships for eBird and Merlin Bird ID, with a focus on Asia, Oceania, Africa and Europe. His passion is connecting birds and people in a way that benefits ecosystems and humanity. A lifelong birder, he recognizes that shorebirds and seabirds are objectively the two best groups of birds and is ~30 species away from his life goal of seeing all the world's shorebirds.



Brett de Groot

Brett de Groot is a professional producer, director, designer and playwright in theatre, film and documentary. After graduating Dux Scholar cum laude from Rhodes University with a triple major in Journalism (Film and Documentary), Music and Law, he debuted his original musical *Simply Broadway* at the Joburg Theatre to sold-out success and critical acclaim, subsequently making him the youngest professional theatre producer in South African history at the age of 21. His groundbreaking documentary, "Call of the Wild", debuted at the prestigious Silwerskermfees in 2023, where it was received with a standing ovation. The documentary was consequently nominated in every category, including Best Director and Best Editing and won Best Sound Design for the documentary's innovative use of sound, making the documentary accessible for visually impaired audience members, and consequently was nominated for a SAFTA in the category of Best Documentary. The film will premiere in New York and Amsterdam in early 2025.



Leandri de Kock

Leandri de Kock is a multidisciplinary ecologist, enthusiastic birder, and adventurous traveller with a background in zoology and statistical ecology. She has extensive fieldwork experience, including an overwintering position as a field assistant on Marion Island. In this role, she managed data downloads from wind stations, conducted carcass searches, and did extensive botany work. She also assisted in the population monitoring efforts of seabirds and seals and gathered GPS data from various seabird species. Her MSc thesis investigated penguin movement behaviour in the Antarctic Peninsula. Currently, Leandri works as a junior zoological consultant in the renewable energy sector.



Christina Hagen

Christina Hagen has an MSc in Conservation Biology from the University of Cape Town's FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology. Her thesis on the foraging ecology and physiology of the Cape Gannet kickstarted her career in seabird conservation. Christina started working on African Penguins at BirdLife South Africa in 2010, mainly focusing on projects relating to how fisheries interact with penguins and research into tracking penguin foraging movements. In 2015, she moved into the role of the Pamela Isdell Fellow of Penguin Conservation and started working to establish a new African Penguin colony at the De Hoop Nature Reserve.



Trevor Hardaker

Trevor Hardaker started birding at a very young age and has been passionate about it ever since. He has spent over 600 days at sea in Southern African waters with additional time at sea also spent in the Southern Ocean around the Subantarctic Islands and Antarctica, in the Pacific Ocean around Australia, New Zealand and Peru, and in the Caribbean around Venezuela. He has the highest bird list for southern Africa of all birders and has currently seen 942 species in the subregion. He is a member of the BirdLife South Africa List and Rarities Committee and the National Atlas Committee. Trevor has a keen interest in photography and twice has been invited to be a speaker at the annual Canon Roadshows to talk on bird photography across the country. He is the co-author of the recently published *Veld Birds of Southern Africa: The Complete Photographic Guide*.



Peter Harrison MBE

Peter Harrison is a renowned seabird expert, author, artist, and conservationist. His latest book, *SEABIRDS: The New Identification Guide*, is a comprehensive guide to the world's 434 seabird species and the culmination of a lifetime dedicated to seabirding. Exploration and discovery are a driving force for Peter—on a 2011 expedition to Chile, he led a five-person team to locate, catch, and describe the first completely new storm-petrel species to be discovered in nearly 100 years, the Pincoya Storm-petrel. In recognition of his global conservation efforts, Peter received an MBE from Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. He was also honoured for his contributions to the conservation of marine birds on the 100th Anniversary of BirdLife International. In 2023, Peter was selected by BirdLife South Africa as the first patron for the Mouse-Free Marion Project to help conserve the albatrosses and petrels of Marion Island.



Kitty Harvill

Kitty Harvill is a Signature member of AFC - Artists for Conservation, the leading collective of Artists painting in support of the environment, based in Vancouver, Canada. She was awarded their highest award in 2022, the Simon Combes Conservation Art Award. She is a member of TWASI - The Wildlife Art Society Intern'l based in the UK and the 3-time recipient of their International Award. She is also an award-winning member of HOAAA, Heart of America Artist's Association. Co-founder of ABUN - Artists & Biologists Unite for Nature, she has overseen projects on every continent with Artists worldwide. Kitty's works are in museum and private collections in Germany, Spain, Singapore, Brazil and the United States. A Clarksville, TN, USA native, she returned to her hometown in 2022 and is active in the Clarksville Arts community.



Danielle Keys

Danielle Keys has been passionate about marine life for as long as she can remember. She started scuba diving at a young age and spent every moment she could in the sea. She was introduced to birding during her postgraduate studies and quickly fell in love with seabirds—not only because they're fascinating but because watching them reveals the hidden details of nature. Her research journey has taken her from Bird Island in South Africa to Réunion and the Seychelles, studying tropical seabirds. Now, as a PhD candidate at Nelson Mandela University, she is exploring the foraging and demographic responses of Wandering Albatrosses on Marion Island, where she's been fortunate to spend two overwintering seasons immersed in this unique environment.



John Kinghorn

John Kinghorn is BirdLife South Africa's Avitourism Project Manager. Qualifying as a professional specialist bird guide straight out of school, John took a gap year to travel southern Africa to record 803 species within a calendar year whilst sharing his love for our country's avifauna with as many people as possible. Whilst continuing to lead tours across the globe, John completed his LLB degree and worked as a candidate attorney, where he practiced in various fields of law. The necessity to complete his articles in contribution toward his admission as an attorney was primarily COVID-induced, and it was not long before he accepted the call to return to conservation, exchanging his suit and tie for his much-preferred khakis and *vellies*. John has continued guiding specialist birding tours, served as an avifaunal consultant for proposed wind farms, and continues to explore his passion for TV presenting through the DSTV channel "Wild Earth".



Roger Machin

Roger Machin has been working at Canon SA since 1996 and has a wealth of knowledge of Canon camera products. He not only does the marketing for the cameras but also uses them on a daily basis, so he is very well-versed in the operation and use of the cameras. He is also a keen birder - having re-kindled the hobby in the last 5 years after a 30-year lapse. Currently approaching 600 species sighted and over 500 photographed in southern Africa, he is also keenly aware of the challenges that bird photographers face.



Dr Alistair McInnes

Alistair McInnes has 25 years' experience in conservation-related work, including time spent at the Durban Natural Science Museum's Ornithology section and at eThekweni Municipality's Biodiversity Planning and Climate Protection Department. He completed his PhD at the University of Cape Town's FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology on the fine-scale drivers of African Penguin foraging performance, including natural and human drivers of their specialised prey, anchovy and sardine. Alistair is currently the Seabird Conservation Programme Manager at BirdLife South Africa, where he and his team work on developing and implementing solutions to the major threats facing seabirds in South Africa's marine environment.



Reason Nyengera

Reason Nyengera is BirdLife South Africa's Albatross Task Force instructor. Originally from Zimbabwe, he grew up deeply rooted in the rural subsistence farming community, which depends on natural resources for the survival of their families. As a child, he was aware of the need for humans to live in harmony with nature, which led him to pursue an Honours Degree in Forestry and Wildlife Resources Management in Zimbabwe. Reason first encountered albatrosses during his Master's in Zoology in South Africa and joined the Albatross Task Force in 2016. For the past eight years Reason has been responsible for multilevel engagements with South African fisheries by working directly with fishers at sea, collecting scientific data, conducting port visits, and developing bespoke Seabird Bycatch Mitigation Solutions for fishing vessels. He also collaborates with the Ocean View Association for Persons with Disabilities on the manufacturing of bird scaring lines.



Martin Perrow

Martin Perrow is a pioneering aquatic ecologist with eclectic interests including lake restoration, fish conservation and survey and impact assessment of seabirds. Amongst an extensive publication record, Martin is perhaps best known for the seminal *Handbook of Ecological Restoration, Wildlife and Wind Farms: Conflicts and Solutions* and *Seabirds: The New Identification Guide*. Terns are a particular passion and with his research group, Martin transformed understanding of tern foraging ecology, especially in relation to the effects of offshore wind farms, whilst providing the evidence to designate protected areas around colonies. In 2022, Martin was made an Honorary Professor at University College London.



Dr Liezl Pretorius

Liezl Pretorius, a medical doctor, veterinarian and zoologist, has a special interest in marine wildlife disease. She spent two overwintering periods on Marion Island with the Marine Mammal Programme and researched fur seal trophic ecology for her MSc on Marion and Gough islands. A member of the Prince Edward Island Advisory Committee since 2018; she assisted with captive bird husbandry post-eradication on Gough Island in 2021 and worked as a veterinarian at the African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary in 2023. Now a Research and Reporting Officer for the Mouse-Free Marion Project, Liezl is driven by her firsthand experience of the island's mouse-driven impacts.



Prof. Peter Ryan

Peter Ryan is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Cape Town and former Director of the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology. He studied the impacts of plastic ingestion on seabirds for his MSc degree and continues to work on reducing the amounts of plastic in marine systems. His PhD was on the radiation of finches in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago and led indirectly to Inaccessible Island being declared a nature reserve. He works mainly on seabirds, and on the conservation of their breeding islands, but has wide-ranging interests in avian biology. He has published over 500 scientific papers and is well known for his many popular articles and books on birds and their conservation.



Hadoram Shirihai

Hadoram Shirihai, from Tel Aviv, Israel, is a highly respected author, photographer, and expert in the field of ornithology and natural history. His passion for birds has taken him all over the world, from the remote islands of the Indian Ocean to the frozen expanses of Antarctica. He has published numerous books, including guides to bird identification and the critically acclaimed 'The Birds of Israel'. Hadoram is the only person in the world to study and document all living taxa of tubenoses at sea and on breeding islands, rediscovering and discovering some of the rarest petrels. Known for his 'Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife', Hadoram spent 12 consecutive Antarctic and Southern Ocean seasons. He also worked on the 'Guide to the Marine Mammals of the World', free diving with numerous great whales, dolphins, and seals.



Keith Springer

Keith Springer is the Operations Manager for the Mouse-Free Marion Project. In this role, he works with Anton Wolfaardt to deliver the planning phase of the project. Keith has a background in conservation and forestry and has been involved with a number of eradication projects on sub-Antarctic islands. Keith has worked as a naturalist, guide and zodiac driver on expedition and cruise ships to Antarctic and the sub-Antarctic islands for over 25 years and has lectured on board on seabirds, penguins, marine mammals and island restoration work. He is based in New Zealand.



Dr Vishal Surbun

Vishal Surbun is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Law at the University of KwaZulu-Natal at the Howard College Campus in Durban, where he is a specialist in the law of the sea and maritime law. Vishal holds an LLB, LLM, and PhD in Maritime law and is a Rhodes Oceans Scholar. He has lectured maritime law at the School for the past 15 years, including masters and doctoral supervision in the law of the sea. Vishal has acted as an external examiner for other maritime-related modules and dissertations (Masters and Doctoral) in tertiary educational institutions across South Africa and served as an expert peer reviewer to several South African Law Journals. Vishal's most recent publication is a commentary on the cases dealing with interdicts against certain multi-national petroleum companies from engaging in offshore seismic surveys in the waters along the Wild Coast of South Africa. Vishal is also an expert consultant to the Durban law firm, Shivesh Aripersad and Associates.



Nandi Thobela

Nandi Thobela pursued her academic ambitions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, earning a Social Science degree in 2010 with majors in Geography, Environmental Management, and Rural Resource Management. Her passion for conservation was sparked during a 10-month internship with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, where her interest in bird conservation began to take flight. In 2022, Nandi joined BirdLife South Africa as the Empowering People Programme Manager. In this role, she leads initiatives to enhance environmental education, promote economic inclusion in avitourism through skills development and mentorship, and co-create projects that support sustainable livelihoods. Her leadership extends across four provinces—Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, and the Free State—with a flagship Sustainable Livelihoods Project envisioned for the Ntsikeni Community.



Andrew Whysall

Andrew Whysall is the current Managing Director of Whylo Distributors of Durban. They are the South African Distributors of Swarovski Optik and have been for the past 28 years, meaning that Andrew has seen a few Swarovski Binoculars in his time! Andrew was born in Durban in 1965, attended Clifton, and then progressed up the hill to Michaelhouse, where he matriculated in 1983. Military service then called, so Andrew joined the South African Police Force to serve. The family photography business run by his Father, Whysalls of Durban, beckoned soon thereafter, and Andrew joined the business in 1988. His love for optical products and people has guided him to Whylo's current business, and today, you will find him in their offices in Durban. Andrew has always been a keen waterman; on windy days, you may find him kite surfing.



Dr Anton Wolfaardt

Anton Wolfaardt has over 30 years of experience in seabird and marine conservation, starting with a year as a seabird researcher on Marion Island in 1994. He later managed conservation efforts on Dassen Island and worked as a Regional Ecologist for CapeNature. From 2008, Anton served as the ACAP Coordinator for UK South Atlantic Overseas Territories, including the Falklands, South Georgia, and Tristan da Cunha. Following his return to South Africa in 2013, he worked as an environmental consultant, lecturer, and Antarctic guide. In 2021, Anton became the Mouse-Free Marion Project Manager.

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