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## Flock to Marion AGAIN! Newsletter #11: 14 January 2025

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Dark-mantled Sooty Albatross

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Dear *Flock to Marion AGAIN!* Passengers,

The time of departure is fast approaching! In around two weeks, we will be looking out toward the Prince Edward Islands, and thousands of seabirds!

In addition to all of the first-class birding, you will also be able to enjoy many other special events aboard this voyage; not least, a number of lectures delivered by experts and true legends of the birding and conservation worlds. You can find more information about the lectures below.

We've created a WhatsApp group to help keep people updated while on board. Seeing as we will be outside of cell range, you'll need to purchase a WiFi package from MSC Cruises to connect to the internet and WhatsApp. You can learn more about these packages [here](#). (Please note that these packages are administered by MSC Cruises, not by BirdLife South Africa). Join the group by accessing this email on your phone, and [clicking here](#). We understand that not everyone will want to purchase a WiFi package or be on their phone during this voyage, so rest assured that this is one of a number of communications channels that will be used on board.

We can't wait to welcome you aboard, and look forward to the glorious week we'll be spending together on the Southern Ocean!

**Important:** Driver's licenses will **NOT** be accepted as valid ID by MSC Cruises for embarkation of South African citizens; you must have your South African ID book or passport. For foreign passengers, ensure you have your passport for embarkation.

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## Last Minute Studying?



**Seabird and Marine  
Mammal ID workshop  
recordings**



 

**BirdLife**  
SOUTH AFRICA  
Giving Conservation Wings

**Flock**  
The BirdLife South Africa Expedition to our Southern Ocean Islands  
to Marion AGAIN! 2025

Did you miss out on the **Seabird and Marine Mammal**

**Identification** workshop that we ran last year? The talks were presented by seabird and marine mammal experts who you might encounter on board *Flock!* If you want a bit of help in learning about the species that we're likely to see on this voyage, you can buy these fascinating online seminars by [clicking here](#). You'll get a link to watch the seminars emailed to you after your purchase, and the proceeds benefit African Penguin conservation work!

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## The Long-Awaited Lecture Schedule!

It's testament to the quality of the speakers we're lucky to have on board the MSC *Musica*, and to the curiosity of you, our guests, that this lecture schedule has been so eagerly awaited! The lecture schedule contains information about the speakers, their lecture topics, and the date, time, and venue of their talks. Before you jump into the schedule in search of edification and enlightenment, please take note of these points:

- You will not need to book your seats in lectures; they will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.
- This schedule has many moving parts, as does the ship hosting it, and so it is subject to change. We will communicate any changes to you in advance where possible. We will not be supplying you with a printed schedule for this reason, but you can print it out yourself, and it will be made available at key points on board the ship.
- The lectures will not be live-streamed to screens in cabins.

[View and download the lecture schedule](#)

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## A Special Opportunity with Peter Harrison



The Mouse-Free Marion (MFM) Project's onboard silent auction will give 3 lucky passengers (and their partners) the opportunity to enjoy exclusive experiences with Peter Harrison, a world-leading seabird expert and the first patron of the MFM Project. A private 1-hour birding experience with Peter Harrison and two private dinners with Peter and his wife, Shirley Metz, are up for auction. But you better hurry, bidding on these exclusive items is only open on 24 and 25 January 2025! Visit the MFM Project Info Desk once you're on board to place your bids on these once-in-a-lifetime experiences!

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***Birdle on Board!***



We're very happy to be welcoming Raining Rock Studios aboard, the brilliant duo behind the *Birdle* bird-guessing game, which you can [try out here](#). They will be running an exclusive cruise-only version of Birdle, *Birdle Marion*, as well as showcasing a new game: *Birdle GO!*

They have designed both games to work without WiFi, but please download them before departure. To download the game, fill out [this quick form](#), which should take less than a minute. Everyone who submits the form will receive an invitation a few days before the cruise to download the *Birdle Marion* app.

The app is the ONLY way to play the exclusive Marion-only edition of *Birdle* as well as *Birdle GO* - a new game where you embark on a birdwatching adventure and snap photos of virtual birds.

*Birdle GO* is currently a prototype and Raining Rock Studio will be on board to receive your feedback. They are excited to test the game and bring their love of birds to a new generation of players.

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## A BirdLasser Challenge at Sea!

We have created a BirdLasser event for Flock to Marion AGAIN! The leaderboard (which will begin updating from the beginning of the trip) can be viewed [here](#). All bird sightings logged on the trip will be counted towards the event. To be added to the event, please email Ernst Retief at [ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za](mailto:ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za) with your name, surname and the email address you used to register on BirdLasser (you can find this under the Settings menu on the BirdLasser app). Please note that adding you to the event is a manual process, and it might take a few days for you to be added.



We look forward to watching the sightings roll in, and hope you enjoy this healthy (but stiff) competition!

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## Missed out on previous newsletters?

We have uploaded all previous Flock to Marion AGAIN! newsletters [here](#). These newsletters contain valuable and important information, so I recommend taking some time to go through them before departure to make sure you haven't missed anything. If you know of anyone who has booked a spot on this voyage but hasn't been receiving these newsletters, please share this email with them.

[Previous newsletters are available here](#)

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### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION!**

1. MSC Cruises has had an answer from the Department of Home Affairs' Immigration Services, and they have confirmed that no immigration clearance needs to be conducted, as the voyage to Marion Island is regarded as a "cruise to nowhere". **Therefore, South African citizens only need ID documents (NOT driver's licenses!), and international travellers require their passports.**
  2. Your boarding time is indicated on your MSC Cruises booking confirmation. Please plan your travel arrangements accordingly. If you require transportation to and from Durban's King Shaka International Airport, MSC Cruises offers a coach shuttle service which must be booked directly with them. Any costs will be for your own account.
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