

12 January 2009

Dear Friends and Family,

I'm writing this letter more than a month later than usual, as we spent all of November on a trip to the southern tip of South America (Tierra del Fuego), islands in the Southern Ocean (Falklands, S. Georgia, and the S. Shetlands), and Antarctica. It has taken the intervening time to recover from the trip, get caught up at work, get all the photos sorted, captioned, and arranged into a digital slide show, and write up an account of the trip, particularly because we took an 11-day camping trip over Christmas, about which more later. Directions to view the slide show are given at the end of this note, followed by Eileen's account of the trip.

Although the end of the year was particularly hectic, the entire year of 2010 was quite intense, with about 103 days or portions thereof spent in the field in California, nearly all focused on finding and learning native plants in the state. Although we did some local day trips, the vast majority of weekends involved significant travel, and we spent 89 nights in our camper, our second highest total since buying it in 2002. We have now visited 32 of the 35 floristic regions in California, so we are really getting a sense of the state as a whole. It was a very successful year, yielding 725 new native taxa (species, subspecies, or varieties) and bringing our total to 1923 out of 6195, or 31%. Although this is more new taxa than we saw in either of our first two years (our list began in January, 2007), that is because we spent so many more days in the field this year (the previous two years were around 65 days each in California). We are experiencing diminishing returns as expected, because one mostly finds the commoner taxa at the beginning, and in addition, each taxon seen is one fewer to be added in the future. This year we averaged about 7 new taxa per day, compared to 10 in 2007.

We also added 127 new native genera in 2009, making 582 out of 964, or 63%. Finally, 16 new native families brought the total to 129 out of 154, or 84%. If I can find the time to do the research before we start up a new cycle of field work, we may make a concerted effort to start tracking down some of those 25 remaining families in 2010. Some of the emphases in 2009 were on desert plants (we made four trips to the desert, counting a trip mostly in December, 2008) and on plants in the aster family. Prior to that Christmas 2008 trip, I searched our pre-2007 California records and found that we had seen about 209 taxa in California before our new list started in 2007 but not since. Many of these were from the 6 weeks of camping we did in the southern half of California in 2003, but a lot went back to my time in graduate school. In the intervening 13 months since compiling that list, we have found most, and now there are only 35 remaining taxa on the list, very satisfying progress.

I did do some work during the year, despite all the time in the field. This was an exciting year in several respects. First, a "dual ladder" structure was created inside the Aptina subsidiary, adding several new and higher wage grades for technical contributors, making it possible for engineers to advance to levels with compensation similar to that of mid- to even upper-level management. I received a double promotion to become a Fellow, the

highest occupied technical level in the company, along with two of my colleagues. We three were then given responsibility for filling the two other new wage grades with suitable candidates, and creating an organization from the three wage grades that would drive innovation in the company. This turned into my chief responsibility for most of the year, and it will continue to occupy most of my time for several more months at least. It has been very interesting and rewarding work and I think will make a big difference to the company.

The second exciting event was that Aptina was finally spun out as a separate, private company in July! Aptina, LLC is now owned by three parties: TPG, a large and very successful investment firm; Riverwood, a small investment firm specializing in technological companies; and Micron, the parent company. This seems to me to be an ideal complement of investors, as they have different areas of expertise, and seem to work together very well. We also have a new CEO who started at spin-out and I have greatly enjoyed interacting with him. After spin-out, all 600+ employees were given an equity share in Aptina, a possibly unique occurrence for a company this large. This equity vests over a 5-year period and is not worth anything until the company changes ownership, for example through an initial public offering (IPO) of stock, an event for which we all devoutly hope! The equity portions were individually adjusted and mine was very gratifying, providing a real vote of confidence in the work I am doing.

Eileen is still enjoying many of the same activities as reported in previous years. Her garden is doing well, now that we have doubled the fencing and excluded a Brush Rabbit. She loves her volunteer work at the Arboretum and her 20 Merriam's Chipmunks here at the house love her (and they are nice to me too). She looks forward to the pictures of her godson Enzo that regularly arrive from his mom, Mahrla. Eileen got to see Enzo in person in El Paso this year in August, at age just over one year, and she'll visit again in a week, for an 18-month check-up. She does a crossword puzzle most nights, and the simply marvelous Los Angeles Times Sunday crosswords by Tunick and Bursztyrn are being published and reprinted at a barely adequate rate to keep up with her habit.

As always, Eileen read an impressive array of literature during the year, finishing a total of 47 books. Some of her favorites were: "The Know-It-All: One Man's Humble Quest to Become the Smartest Person in the World" by A. J. Jacobs; "The Eternal Frontier: An Ecological History of North America and Its Peoples" by Tim Flannery; "A Rebel War Clerk's Diary", by John B. Jones; "Mrs. Chippy's Last Expedition: The Remarkable Journal of Shackleton's Polar-Bound Cat" by Caroline Alexander; and "1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus" by Charles C. Mann. Brian also especially liked the first two in Eileen's list, plus Bill Bryson's "A Short History of Nearly Everything."

This year the 3-year drought that started right after we moved here looked to be worsening, but mercifully a fair amount of late season rain came early in 2009, and by the end of the winter the total was similar to that in the two preceding years (but still below average). The lateness of the rain seemed to cause the summer dry-out to be delayed, so we did not come close to running out of water as in the previous two summers, which

was quite a relief. Nonetheless, we did have an even worse fire than the year before, the Lockheed Fire, which burned 7817 acres between Aug. 12–23, and got within 3 miles of our house. It was the first major fire of the season, so many firefighters and equipment were available to attack it, and they handled it masterfully. There were no deaths, only 10 injuries, and only 14 buildings affected. The fire fighting cost \$27 million; I don't think the cause was ever determined. Back to rainfall, so far this winter we have been somewhat below average (despite 9.9 inches in one day in October!), but the long-range forecasts have been for lots of rain because of El Niño, and indeed it is supposed to start raining tomorrow and continue off and on for a week.

We're both still running for exercise. We run on quiet back streets through the redwoods, with about 300 feet elevation loss on the way out and of course an equal gain on the way back. I'd like for the order of those two to be reversed, to get the uphill part over in the first half, but it's the price you must pay to live higher on a slope for great views. Eileen likes it because it gives her a chance to warm up fully. We both do 3 or 4 days of 3 to 4 miles each during the week, and on the weekends probably average almost as many hiking miles per day, for a weekly average of a bit under 20 miles. Our toughest hike of the year was a repeat of one we did in 2003: Kearsarge Pass, a 10-mile round trip with 2500 feet of climbing, starting at a lofty 9240 foot elevation campground. For the first time ever, I had trouble sleeping because of altitude, waking up during the night and having trouble breathing. But the botany and scenery were outstanding!

Our first trip of the year started in December 2008. Aptina closed down over the holidays, and we planned a 2-week trip to Baja, including a trip with pack horses into the isolated mountains of the Cape region. But I had been quite sick on the Brazil trip in November, and ended up with bronchitis after we got home, so we had to cancel. I was finally well enough to travel right after Christmas, so we set off for the California deserts. Stargazing was excellent the first half of the trip until the moon interfered. One day we met up with friends from Pennsylvania, John Buhr and Vanessa Lum, and their children Claire and Brian, and took a lovely day hike together in Anza Borrego.

Another day we drove to the San Diego coast for some maritime botanizing, and as we were about to leave Torrey Pines State Preserve, the sun began sinking below the horizon. So we decided to wait a few minutes to try for about the ten billionth time to see a green flash, a near mythical phenomenon that occurs for a moment or two just after the sun sets, under uncommon conditions of refraction related to air temperature inversions. A few seconds before the last sliver of sun disappeared below the horizon, we raised our binoculars, and watched the carmine slice disappear ... and after a moment, there were two full seconds of green glory!! I heard Eileen's gasp at the same moment I saw it – wow! I've wanted to see one ever since I was a kid and read about it in Edwin Way Teale's "Wandering through Winter". And he saw his one and only green flash just a few miles from where we saw it that evening.

A February trip to the Sacramento Valley refuges yielded a Eurasian Teal (which I've not seen for 20 years), and a hybrid of a Eurasian Teal with our Green-winged Teal (never seen before), nice mountain lion tracks, and a very odd duck at very long range, which

looked a hybrid between a Ruddy Duck and a Gadwall, an unlikely combination. A quick trip to Anza-Borrego in early March yielded a nice assortment of desert wildflowers in bloom (such as Desert Lily), some good plants ## chaparral areas closer to the coast (Chocolate Lily, California Peony), Desert Kangaroo Rat, and Lawrence's Goldfinch, a stunning bird whose tinkling glass call we heard many times this spring. Highlights of a later March trip to the Carrizo Plains included Kit Fox and Nelson's Antelope Squirrel (which occurs nowhere else in the world). A rainstorm Saturday night turned the roads to treacherous mud, and we towed multiple vehicles out the next morning.

In April we took a 9-day trip to the East Mojave Desert and Death Valley, which was fabulous for flowers, and included wonderful remote camping. Rare plants included Rock Haurandya, a yellow-flowered cliff dwelling plant with only about 200 plants known in two limestone canyons, and the sensational Panamint Daisy, a 3-foot tall sunflower growing in arid canyons on one slope of one mountain range. We caught cactus mice at Fort Piute, which was a life mammal for Eileen. There were many fine days in the field in May, but one the last day of the month with Mike Parmeter and Juanita Doran in Napa and Lake Counties was especially memorable for the plants and the company.

In June we took a 10-day trip organized around a Legacy Club trip with The Nature Conservancy to Santa Cruz Island, off the coast of Ventura Co. The hike on the island was great, and Long-beaked Common Dolphins on the boat ride were only our second ever. From there we visited many of the mountain ranges of southwest California, enjoying our anniversary on Mt. Pinos. A surprise was waking up one morning in San Luis Obispo Co. and hearing Northern Parula, an eastern North American warbler, from the camper. We saw 99 new native plant taxa on this trip, the highest total for the year (or ever again in California for a trip of this length – diminishing returns in action again). Gray fox was a treat.

In July we planned 6 days around a workshop in the White Mts., home to the ancient Bristlecone Pines. On that trip we hiked to 13,600 feet, the highest we have been in the state, at which point only two species of plants could be seen. We had our best looks ever at Mountain Cottontail feeding right near the camper several early mornings. One field trip was so jam-packed with unfamiliar plants that after it ended around 2 pm, we quickly found a campsite, and it then took me 6.5 hours to key out all the plant fragments of new taxa that I had collected. I try to independently verify all identifications on led field trips, using samples or photos, not because I do not believe the leaders (they are rarely wrong), but to learn the plants better myself.

We were still botanizing in September, at high elevations in the Sierras. At Mono Pass we photographed three lovely Rosy Finches. At Westfall Meadow in Yosemite, minutes after Eileen finally spotted our quarry, Leathery Grape Fern, we both saw a Great Gray Owl fly by, and we spent most of the next hour watching it hunt, and also interact with a Goshawk. There are only about 40 Great Gray Owls in California, a number that has been stable for decades, but it seems remarkable that the species persists in such small numbers. By October we were preparing for Antarctica, but fit in a camping trip to Pinnacles with our friend Paul Kane from Rochester. We visited both talus caves in the

park, and were lucky in one to get great looks at Townsend's Big-eared Bat, a generally uncommon species.

The Antarctica trip ran from November 2 to December 1, and I'll give a few statistics here that won't appear in Eileen's later account. We saw 121 native bird species, of which 88 were new (73%), and 16 native mammals, of which 13 were new (83%). These low numbers illustrate that this is a trip you do for reasons other than seeing a lot of new species; compare to our Kenya trip of similar length and expense, with about 630 new birds and 50 new mammals. Our life bird lists now stand at 2359 (Brian) and 2262 (Eileen), and mammals at 295 (Brian) and 286 (Eileen). Four bird families were firsts for us: penguins, seedsnipes, sheathbills, and diving petrels. We also saw guanacos, the wild species from which llamas derive; this was our first member of the camel family, which also includes the vicuña (the wild species from which alpaca is derived) and the two camels (only one of which barely survives outside of domestication). In the photographic arena, we took over 2600 photos, but each night I sorted through them and deleted as many as possible, so we only came home with only slightly over 900. These were edited down to a little over 130 for the final slide show.

We did a final desert trip December 23 – January 3 while Aptina was closed for the holidays, visiting three interesting and isolated mountain ranges, the Whipple, Chuckwalla, and Clark Mountains. Emphasis was on finding rare cacti, and we had good success, also seeing Pinyon Jay and Crissal Thrasher.

Eileen and I hope that you and your families are doing well. We always like to hear from people or have them visit if in the area; our contact info is given below. Happy holidays!

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To view the Antarctica slide show, first click on or cut and paste this link:

<http://www.kodakgallery.com/gallery/creativeapps/slideShow/Main.jsp?token=125949821803%3A1531965180>

On the bottom right of the screen, there are three icons under "View"; the middle will be highlighted. I suggest you either select the left icon, which will show captions for each image, or the right icon, which shows larger images but no captions. Near this is the "Speed" menu; at the default speed (5 seconds per image), the show will take about 12 minutes. It can also be set to a slower speed (even while the show is playing), which will take 19 minutes. Then clicking the single right-pointing triangle starts the show. Or you can use the double right-pointing triangles to advance the slides manually, one at a time, at your own pace. Please let me know if you have any trouble viewing this slide show. Enjoy!

Antarctica Account by Eileen

I did not see any penguins today. It's not surprising really since we returned from our Antarctic trip almost a week ago. But a little disappointing nonetheless.

Our trip began in Ushuaia, Argentina where we spent two days with a local guide, Evelyn, exploring the town, nearby Tierra del Fuego National Park, and Rio Grande, which we reached after a two-hour scenic drive across the Andes. Some favorite birds of those two days include Andean Condor, Long-tailed Meadowlark (which is a brilliant red underneath, rather than the familiar yellow of our own meadowlark), Dolphin Gulls, Magellanic Woodpecker, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Patagonian Sierra-Finch, and Chilean Flamingos. We also saw a Colpeo Fox and several Guanacos.

Once, we delayed a walk around a pond full of the flamingos because a fierce snow squall blew in suddenly. Brian looked out the window of the van and saw one of our hoped-for "target birds", a Magellanic Plover. A moment later, the bird was joined by its mate. "Look!", Evelyn cried, "They are thinking about having children!" Another special moment was when Rio Grande guide Tabare found a Two-banded Plover with young. He caught one of the chicks to show us and I held the tiny fluffball in my hand before giving him back to his real mother.

Friday 6 November was the day we boarded the boat. In the morning, we met the five other members of the WildWings group: Jim and Chris, John and Di, and Kevin; with Esteban, our new guide, we revisited Tierra del Fuego NP. We had an even better view of the Colpeo Fox and added a few new birds including Austral Parakeet, White-crested Elania, and Fire-eyed Diucon. An Andean Condor flew over and Esteban remarked that it would be the epitome of his natural-history career to photograph an Andean Condor and an Albatross together in the same frame. It was one of his great life goals to make this happen. "First", he said, outlining the necessary steps to achieve that goal, "I have to buy a camera..."

After a picnic lunch in the park, Esteban dropped us off at the ship. We walked up the gangway, were assigned cabins, got organized, and spent a couple of hours on deck, while the boat sailed the Beagle Channel. New birds: Southern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Fulmar, and Black-browed Albatross.

7 November: Sometime during the night we left the Beagle Channel which was immediately detectable from the motion of the boat. We spent all day at sea on the way to the Falkland Islands birding outside on the highest deck or inside from the bridge. Favorites: Wilson's Storm Petrels, old friends from east coast pelagic trips; beautifully patterned Cape Petrels; Peale's Dolphins riding the bow waves; and both Southern and Northern Royal Albatrosses.

8 November: We spent most of the day on landing on two of the northwesternmost Falkland islands. On West Point Island, we worked our way between tussocks and

through mud to visit a colony of Black-browed Albatrosses and their very close neighbors, Rockhopper Penguins. On Carcass Island (which drew its inspiring name from an 18th century ship), we had two more penguins, Magellanic and Gentoo.

9 November: Today we zodiaced to Steeple Jason Island, described in the daily bulletin as a "windswept exposed island, six miles long by one mile wide, home to the world's largest Black-browed Albatross colony, about 113,000 pairs." There are also about 65,000 pairs of Rockhopper Penguins, most of which we attempted to photograph. "Landing is notoriously challenging due to unimpeded sea swells from the west, strong tidal currents and rapidly changing weather." However, thanks to the skill of, and much assistance from, the crew and guides, we scrambled over the wet rocks at the landing place and onto the island.

We spent most of the afternoon in the bridge. We finally saw a Common Diving Petrel and had very good views of Commerson's Dolphins.

10 November: We visited the capital city of the Falklands, Stanley. Took a bus to Gypsy Cove and followed the nature trail. The cove had a white sand beach and tropical-blue water and signs warning visitors not to leave the trail due to live land-mines left from the war in 1982.

We walked back to town from the cove, starting in fierce snow squall which quickly blew over. Along the way we saw Falkland Steamer Ducks, including a mom with her fluffy gray ducklings bobbing in the water near shore; Crested Ducks, Long-tailed Meadowlark, a Red-chested Dotterel, Brown-hooded Gulls, and Blackish Oystercatchers.

We enjoyed a picnic lunch outside the Visitor Center and shared a few crumbs with a Dolphin Gull. Inside the Visitor Center, we browsed through the exhibits and bought a book, 74 Days.

11 November: Bleeker Island was the destination this morning with an easy landing on a sand beach. At one of several fresh-water ponds we saw White-tufted Grebe and Silver Teal. We walked across the island to colonies of Imperial Shag, Rockhopper Penguins, Magellanic Penguins, and many Sheathbills.

The afternoon was spent at sea on our way from the Falklands to South Georgia Island. The pelagic birding was good, with many Gray-backed Storm-Petrels, quite a few great albatrosses, and a single Blue Petrel.

12 November: We had a full day at sea, continuing on our way to South Georgia Island. We attended a mandatory briefing this morning; there are strict regulations regarding landing on the island and all clothing and gear must be cleaned thoroughly to prevent introducing alien plants, animals or germs. A list of regulations must be read and signed by every passenger. Every time we return from a landing, boots are washed in disinfectant and scrubbed clean.

Birds today included Kerguelen Petrel, an unusual seabird noted for its occasional towering flights far above the water's surface, which we saw.

13 November: Just after breakfast, we had a very good look at a beautiful Gray-headed Albatross just off the stern. The temperature is relatively mild, right around freezing, but there is a good wind making it feel much colder. We are still at sea, heading for South Georgia.

After a long day of pelagic birding from the bridge or on deck, hours spent at the window or the rail scanning ocean and sky, Brian went to bed immediately after dinner. He was not there long however, before he began feeling the first symptoms of the intestinal bug that several other passengers had already experienced. (The crew was very diligent about encouraging cleanliness and passengers were required to use the alcohol-based hand sanitizers before entering the dining room or observation room; buffet lines were discontinued to reduce the number of people handling serving utensils, etc.)

14 November: The doctor made a house call (cabin call?) dispensing advice and medication for Brian and restricting him to our cabin, which meant no meals in the dining room and no landings. But he felt poorly enough that he stayed put and did not have to be locked in. I brought breakfast to him and then went to the mudroom to dress for the landing at King Haakon Bay.

I stepped out of the zodiac and on to a beach covered with Southern Elephant Seals of all ages. A huge "Beachmaster" put his flipper around a female and they lay together, side by side. A very small youngster nuzzled up to his mother and nursed. There were seals yawning, stretching, or reaching for an itchy spot with a flipper. They grunted and snorted and napped. Sometimes two Beachmasters sparred with each other, rearing up and slamming into each other with audible thuds, slashing with big teeth and drawing blood, adding to an extensive collection of scars.

I was still near the landing site, next to the rope to which we clipped life vests while were on shore, when I noticed a large Fur Seal. We'd been reminded that they can be dangerous so it was a little alarming when he yawned widely, showing long teeth that could I hear snap together. He started heading toward the water and I was directly in his path. Emphatic directions from the guides not to encourage the seals' chase instincts by running were fresh in my mind and a fellow passenger kept repeating softly, "don't move, don't move". So I didn't run. [I didn't even run that time in Montana when Brian suddenly said "don't move," and I knew there was a Grizzly Bear behind me. OK, it turned out to be a mama Mountain Goat and her very small baby Mountain Goat, more of a Foothill Goat at that age, I guess. But still.] Anyway, I didn't run but I did step politely aside and was relieved to see the Fur Seal thump across the life vest line into the water. He probably never even noticed me but I felt I'd barely escaped those flashing teeth.

The wind and swells came up in the afternoon and it was too rough to make another landing. But it was sunny and the scenery made it worth being out on deck. I brought

soup and bread to Brian for lunch and later, Cathy, the hotel manager, brought dinner but he ate very little.

15 November: Brian felt much better this morning and was able to eat breakfast. I went to the dining room to fix a plate and one of the guides looked at my generous selections and observed, "I see that Brian has his appetite back." I quickly pointed out that the plate included my breakfast as well as Brian's.

The doctor gave Brian permission to participate in the landings today as long as he felt up for it. The first one was on Salisbury Plain. There were more Southern Elephant Seals and Fur Seals; also Antarctic Tern, South Georgia Shag, Subantarctic Skua, and South Georgian Pintail. We'd had glimpses of King Penguins but here we saw our first real colony of them and it was spectacular.

Of the seven species of penguins we saw on our trip, the Kings were the largest and most elegant. At a superficial glance, you might call them black-and-white, but a closer study will reveal them to be a more subtle silvery-gray and snowy-white overall. The head really is black, beautifully accented in colors of orange and saffron, and the slender, decurved bill is edged with a blaze of apricot. The snowy upper breast is suffused with a golden wash. Thousands of birds inhabited the beach, the colors of every individual glowing as though lit from within, each mirrored and magnified by the glow from his neighbor, so that, at mid-day, the plain was transformed into a sunset of King Penguins.

By this time, Brian was feeling rather tired and weak, the after-effects of the bug, so we were about to head back to the ship. Brian made one last scan with the binoculars before turning around and said, "Oh, we have to keep going!" I aimed my binoculars where he was looking. Chicks! Penguin chicks! We were too early in the season for brand new chicks but King babies remain with their parents for two years and we'd just discovered the nursery. But eventually we had to tear ourselves away to return to the ship, eat lunch, and get ready for the afternoon landing on Prion Island.

For our visit to Prion this afternoon, we were divided into small groups led by one of the guides and restricted to a path that took us to a couple of viewing platforms. We finally saw a South Georgia Pipit, having missed it several times on the Falkland Islands. We also saw two nests, each with a Wandering Albatross chick waiting patiently (as far as we could tell; their expressions didn't change much) for a parent to show up and feed it. Since the adults are gone hunting for quite a long time, it is a major event when the reunion takes place and the chick is fed and we felt very lucky to see it happen. (And on second thought, I think the chicks really did look happier when the parents arrived.)

16 November: We had mostly a scenery day today. We landed at Stromness Bay and walked a couple of miles. Antarctic Terns flew by carrying food and there were some good plant assemblages on the exposed rocks.

17 November: There is a tradition, we learned, of offering a toast to Shackleton at his gravesite. So when we landed at Grytviken this morning, we gathered at the cemetery

where he was buried. Whiskey was poured, a moving tribute was read, and glasses were raised to "the Boss". After the toast, we poured the remaining drops of whiskey on his grave. It was nice to participate in the tradition.

We meandered through the old whaling station, now all rusted and decaying; visited the Lutheran church, now housing an explorers' library as well as tributes and memorials to Shackleton; were invited to ring the church bells in the choir loft, which we did; and browsed through the museum.

We zipped back to the ship for lunch and then returned to shore for a hike with guide and bird expert, Tony, to look for Light-mantled Sooty Albatross on the nest. We started off along a beach covered with smooth, rounded stones and picked our way through Elephant Seals and Fur Seals. After a while we left the beach and headed across wet boggy tussock grass, through pools of water, and up snow-covered hills. Finally, we came to some cliffs overlooking the beach. Tony clambered down to look for the albatross while we scanned the cliffs from above. It had been snowing since we left the ship and the trek had required some effort. While we waited in the cold, one birder shivered and wondered, "Can we go home now? I'm cold, I'm wet, and I'm about to fall off a cliff." But after some more searching, four nests were found, each attended by a prospective parent calmly awaiting the blessed event. The albatrosses were the color of the gray afternoon sky, with darker sooty-gray heads and wings, and eyes with the added emphasis of a white ring around them. We marveled at each bird in turn. Then we went home.

18 November: After breakfast, we landed at St. Andrews Bay to visit South Georgia's largest and fastest growing King Penguin colony. It was also home to about 6000 Southern Elephant Seals. We wandered through large crowds of penguins and seals until reached the main penguin nursery, where all the year-old chicks were. In contrast to the sleek elegance of their parents, the young ones were big round balls of fluffy brown feathers and they didn't have complete mastery of their motor skills. Some of them barreled around, bouncing pinball-like off any adults in their path; when less-steady playmates collided, one or both of them were knocked off their feet. Others toddled after their parents, uttering their piping baby cries, reaching up to touch their bills to the parent's, asking to be fed.

The winds picked up in the afternoon producing the largest swells we'd seen so far, so we stayed at sea rather than attempting any landings.

19 November: After a rough night (wave-wise) and with a continuing strong wind, we abandoned original plans and retreated north to West Cumberland Bay. We had a sunny landing with good photographic opportunities. Saw a pod of whales with two or three animals, at least one with a large, black dorsal fin, indicating it was probably a Killer Whale.

20 November: I was upstairs early, enjoying coffee in the observation room, when Brian called me on the radio to tell me he was seeing King Penguins porpoising. I had good views of them through the window. A little while later, I joined him on the top deck to

see a mixed flock of Gentoo, Chinstrap, and Macaroni Penguins. All this excitement occurred before breakfast!

After breakfast, we took a zodiac tour of Cooper Bay and had more good views of both Chinstraps and Macaronis as well as beautiful scenery. We had a second zodiac tour in the afternoon, with the Doctor as driver/tour guide. The ship stopped in Drygalski Fjord and we zoomed in to Larsen Harbor, which was gorgeous, ringed with mountains and snow-covered, sharp, craggy ridges. We saw several Weddell Seals, a new seal for us. The Doctor was able to identify them by their beautiful blue-gray color and the fact that "they are," he said, "commonly known as the cutest seal there is." We would certainly hate to miss that!

We were back on the mother ship in time for afternoon "tea" which usually included freshly-baked cookies. But because there were several new cases of the Ship Bug, trays of cookies from which everyone helped him/herself were deemed possible germ-spreaders. As a consolation, Woody (our head guide), said there would be hot chocolate with "something special". The "special" turned out to be the addition of Bailey's Irish Cream liqueur. I'd already poured coffee so originally declined the Special then thought better and tried to accept but the server sailed on by, saying, "Sorry, no second chances." That'll teach me!

Brian was out on deck looking for Snow Petrel as we passed slowly through the Drygalski Fjord, a narrow stretch of water lined with sharp-toothed mountains and rugged blue glaciers. Chunks of ice littered the surface of the water. I was still inside, having managed to wrangle a cup of the Special, when someone wandered through singing, "there's no Petrel like Snow Petrel..."

21 November: Today was spent at sea west of South Georgia. We finally saw a Snow Petrel and it was a special moment. A beautiful all-white bird accented with black eyes and bill, it is described in the guide book as "among the most sought-after specialties of the region, often being termed the 'angel of Antarctica'". As if that weren't enough, a Wandering Albatross also showed up. They are the longest-winged of all flying birds. Those long, slender wings can carry them for days at a time without a break. Shortly afterward whale blows were sighted. They continued quite frequently along the starboard side of the boat and we got a good view of two Fin Whales before we left them behind.

22 November: We are at sea east of Elephant Island.

From the ship's daily bulletin: "The fair breeze blew, white foam flew, the furrow followed free. We were the first that ever burst, into that silent sea." - Samuel Taylor Coleridge

There was a lot of fog today. Not a lot was seen -- including a pod of Bottlenose Whales which we missed, sadly. About 25 Antarctic Petrels showed up at dinnertime, which really spiced it up for us.

23 November: We arrived at Elephant Island around 5 am, and found it surrounded by ice, a very dramatic entrance! There were Snow Petrels flying among the icebergs, and Antarctic Petrels, which followed the ship the whole day. Saw tens of Fin Whales but otherwise the time at sea was pretty dull, until late afternoon when we found Adelie Penguins on several icebergs.

24 November: After breakfast, we went up on deck to watch the ship navigate through the narrow passage of Neptune's Bellows. The water was covered with plates of ice and the ship either nudged them aside or created new cracks in them as it plowed through. We saw several seals, both Crabeater and Leopard, hauled out on some of the ice plates.

We passed through Neptune's Bellows and into the caldera of Port Foster where we took zodiacs to Whaler's Bay, Deception Island. We walked across a flat cinder beach that extended 100 meters inland before meeting the steep caldera wall, and then up a snow-covered hill to Neptune's Window. Once there, we could look through the window out to sea and a nice view of several icebergs. There were Cape Petrels nesting on the cliffs. Along the beach were ruins of old wooden buildings and boats from the whaling days.

Later, we went to the observation room/bar to hear guide Annie's entertaining talk about nautical expressions that have made their way into everyday English.

25 November: Killer Whales showed up before breakfast and we had some good, if long-distance, views of them surfacing and lobtailing. After breakfast, we took a zodiac cruise in Wilhelmina Bay with Annie as our guide and driver. Saw beautiful iceberg sculptures and Annie pointed out some of their intriguing features, like bubble rills and suncups. We checked out the rusted wreck of a boat from the whaling days that had caught fire and been run aground in order to save crew and cargo. Antarctic Terns were flying around, and roosting on, the rusty remains. The photography expert on the voyage has emphasized rust as an interesting element in photos and as we approached ruins one the passengers exclaimed, "Oh, rust! We'll be here all morning."

In the afternoon, we landed on Cuverville Island amid a large colony of Gentoo Penguins. The island was snow- and ice-covered and we hopped from the zodiacs into the surf and then climbed up a couple of steps that had been carved into the ice by the guides. We could range in either direction along the beach but had stay on a marked path to avoid creating postholes in the snow and making the going difficult for the penguins. We made our way directly into the wind and blowing snow for a few minutes before settling down to observe and photograph the penguins. Gentoos are stocky little penguins with a reddish-orange bill and white patches that begin behind the eye and extend to the top of the head where they meet. We had a lot of fun watching them going about their penguin duties, toddling busily around like animated bowling pins. We saw Gentoos courting and falling in love and setting up housekeeping together. Too bad we couldn't be there to see the chicks!

We also had good looks at South Polar Skua for the first time on the trip. The zodiac trip back to the ship was pretty exciting. We made our way through a few icebergs and then

the open water and some pretty good swells. Getting to the gangway from the zodiac required precise timing to make the step from the rising-and-falling zodiac to the rising-and-falling ship. Fortunately there was plenty of help from the zodiac driver, and a crew member stationed on the gangway. (Why is it called a "gang" way when only 3 people are allowed on it at one time?)

26 November: Today we went ashore at Neko Harbor, our first landing on the Antarctic continent. Once again, we climbed from zodiac into the water and up some ice steps to the shore and a welcoming (I'm sure) colony of Gentoo Penguins. We were somewhat sheltered from the wind here but when we went around the curve of the hill and began climbing along a marked trail to a rock outcrop, we were blasted by wind strong enough to knock you us balance. On the way down, the wind blew sharp snow-crystals in our faces. After indulging in some more Gentoo-watching, we headed back to the mother ship to warm up with hot drinks and lunch.

27 November: David was our driver/guide on our zodiac cruise. We visited Booth Island at the north end of the Lemaire channel. Highlights: a Leopard Seal swam very near the zodiac, surfacing and looking at us several times; a couple of Minke Whales swam nearby, surfacing and blowing; more iceberg sculptures in various shades of blue and turquoise; an Adelie Penguin on an iceberg; while we watched, a tall column of snow-covered ice calved from a glacier. Also: about a dozen Killer Whales interacting with three Minke Whales, with spy-hopping, lobtailing, rolling, and a breach!

28 November: At sea, with many Antarctic Petrels, a repeating Snow Petrel, great views of the beautiful Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. Many seabirds were back now that we were in deeper water.

29 November: There were a few albatrosses and many Sooty Shearwaters as we finished the Drake Passage and rounded the horn.

30 November: We now faced 31 hours of travel to get back home. Brian had a relapse of his earlier ailments which made the trip quite an ordeal.

We've been back for a few weeks now, looking at the photographs and missing the penguins. I am writing this account in our living room, which, like the observation room on the ship, has large windows on three sides. Instead of seabirds and glaciers, we have Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Pygmy Nuthatches, Steller's Jays, and Merriam's Chipmunks coming to the feeders; and Redwoods, Douglas Firs, and the big ridge of Ben Lomond Mountain looming up behind the house. We don't have any zodiac adventures to look forward to but we just did an eight-mile hike on a field trip with the California Native Plant Society and we spent eleven days camping in the southern California deserts over Christmas. So while it is always difficult to see such an experience as we enjoyed in the Southern Ocean come to an end, things really are pretty good right here at home. Still, it would be nice if a Wandering Albatross were to fly past our port side window.