

Cobb's Wren *Troglodytes cobbi* foraging in penguin burrows

Cobb's Wren *Troglodytes cobbi* is an insular form of the House Wren *T. aedon* superspecies endemic to the Falkland Islands, where it is currently limited to rat-free islands off both East and West Falkland. It has developed some characteristics unique amongst Troglodytidae, especially its habit of foraging among rocks and seaweed along the tideline and in the intertidal zone². It is usually, but not invariably, associated with Tussac Grass *Poa flabellata*⁴.

On 17 January 2008, on Carcass Island, West Falkland, I observed a Cobb's Wren feeding, mostly on the ground or in the lower levels of scattered Tussac Grass, within an active colony of Magellanic Penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus*. On several occasions the wren disappeared into penguin burrows, often remaining out of sight for a minute or more. As far as could be ascertained, from the presence of freshly disturbed soil at the entrance, these burrows were in use, although whether a penguin

was actually present could not be determined. It was not possible to see what, if anything, the wren obtained from the burrow.

Penguins are known to harbour various arthropod ectoparasites^{1,3}. In January, most Magellanic Penguin nests will contain well-grown young, and there is typically a heavy infestation of aggressive mobile fleas (R. W. Woods pers. comm.). It seems probable that the wren was exploiting this food source or other commensals in the penguin burrow or nest; if so, this appears not to have been previously described for the species.

References

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