

Seawatching's eastern promise

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Although seabird-oriented pelagics are increasingly familiar in the Neotropics, searching for seabirds by seawatching from land is less so. Here one pioneer shares his experiences of tubenoses and more from a promontory on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

When you picture the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), hereafter simply 'the Falklands' or 'the Islands', you think of penguin colonies, thousands of nesting Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*, millions of prions *Pachyptila* spp., whales and dolphins, and of course cruise liners. Lying in the southeasternmost corner of the Neotropical biogeographical region, the islands are a stop-off on your way to greater adventures in South Georgia and Antarctica. For birders, cruise liners provide a perfect opportunity to see some of the most amazing seabirds the South Atlantic has to offer, but what

about seeing these birds from land (i.e., traditional 'seawatching')?

When I moved to the Islands in November 2020 I was eager to explore their seawatching potential. I had my worries; would the famous winds prove too much to cope with? Would the Islands be too isolated to attract many birds away from breeding populations? One thing was for sure: swapping counting common wildfowl, gulls and divers while seawatching from the east coast of the UK for the dream of counting albatross, shearwaters and petrels in the Falklands had me salivating.



All photos taken by Ryan Irvine.

1 Seawatching at Cape Pembroke, East Falkland, Falkland Islands (Malvinas).