

## Antarctic Wildlife

James Lowen

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James Lowen, the author of the recently published Bradt guide “Pantanal Wildlife: A Visitor’s Guide to Brazil’s Great Wetland” spent several years living in South America. He worked there as a wildlife writer, editor, photographer and guide specializing in bringing nature to life for the non-specialist. Benefiting from a wide experience with Antarctic wildlife, he reached his goal of producing a handy ID guide that enables visitors to identify wildlife they encounter on their journey from the southern tip of South America to Antarctica.

Antarctic Wildlife is the definitive identification guide to the birds and marine mammals of the Antarctic Peninsula, Drake Passage and Beagle Channel. The introductory chapters are devoted to familiarizing the reader with using the book, the three main environments covered (continental, oceanic and Antarctic), conservation-related activities, and tourism. Subsequent chapters focus on Antarctic wildlife – mammals, birds and plants as well as what to look for and where, timing (the Antarctic season – month by month) and tips on identification. Roughly two-thirds of the book, pages 77 through 231, are devoted to the species accounts. The remainder of the book, pages 232 through 240, provides additional information on how to prepare for your Antarctic cruise, how to get the best out of it, what to bring and how to take the best photographs or films of the wildlife you see on your trip.

This is one of the best and most practical field guides I have seen in the recent years. Unlike other guides which have traditionally relied on paintings, this book contains stunning color photographs to illustrate all the birds and marine mammals of the region. Digitally manipulated plates show multiple individuals inserted together over a common background. As an ornithologist, I appreciate not only pictures illustrating all the bird species in their varied plumage, age categories and color morphs, but also those showing swimming, feeding, fighting, and other behaviors as well as those arranged to show species’ size differences. Many species such as pelagic birds are shown with one to three photos each, both in dorsal and ventral views in flight. The pictures are also arranged in a way that similar species are compared on the same plate. Concise and accurate texts describe key identification features of all the species of the area covered. I would also like to highlight the fact that the back cover of the book urges readers to action and your purchase of the guide results in a donation toward conservation efforts to save albatrosses. More than three-quarters of the world’s albatross species are now threatened with global extinction and without our help, the losses could become so great that recovery may be impossible.

This is a job very well done. I cannot wait to travel to the southern tip of the globe with this book in my pocket.

Miroslav Čapek (Brno)