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Introduction

It was a successful season for the IAATO yacht fleet with very few incidents to report. A few yacht operators were supporting scientific projects this year, on either combined science & tourism trips or more specialized expeditions, in South Georgia as well as in the Antarctic, as well as participating to Citizen Science projects.

Yachts in Antarctica

Records show that a total of 52 yachts visited Antarctica through the 2018-19 season, showing an increase compared to last year (45). This figure was made up of:

- 21 IAATO yachts, some of which were on one-off visits.
- 13 non IAATO charter yachts
- 18 non-IAATO private yachts
- 8 yachts were understood to have not had Antarctic authorization (of which 5 private yachts, and 3 non IAATO charter yachts)
- 77 yacht visits were recorded at Port Lockroy this season
Growth in the Yacht Sector

The last few years have seen a steady increase of yacht visits, to the Antarctic peninsula mainly. It is not easy to get a clear idea of what the trend is, because there are a few different type of yachts visiting, which we can classify as follows:

- Charter Sailing Yachts, IAATO Members
- Charter Motor Yachts, IAATO Members
- Charter Sailing Yachts, non IAATO Members
- Private Sailing Yachts, usually one-off visits
- Private Motor Yachts, on charter, endorsed by an IAATO member
- Private Motor Yachts, one off visits, sometimes endorsed by an IAATO member

There seems to be an increasing demand, in particular in the Motor Yacht charter area, with people seeking smaller groups and high standards of comfort, and also some interest in using other technologies such as helicopters, submersibles, etc. These activities inevitably bring some additional risk, and are of course subject to authorization.

The charter sailing fleet has had a sharp increase in the last 15 years, but seems to have now stabilized, with most of the yachts being IAATO members and operating to high standards. It is interesting to note French sailing yachts are still a majority, whether they are charter or private yachts.
Supporting Scientific & Film Projects

Quite a few IAATO yachts were supporting various scientific and film projects this season, both in South Georgia or in Antarctica. This year was also saw three yachts using the OLEX system to help gathering data, in particular in shallow areas where ships cannot go.

Pelagic Expeditions were supporting two filming projects this season.

Pelagic supported a BBC team on Bird Island for 5 weeks in January/February.

Pelagic Australis supported a BBC team on the Peninsula in March filming humpbacks (Gerlache) and finn whales (around Elephant Island)

Pelagic Expeditions were involved in two projects this season. Although they were not OOR for the NHK Broadcast (DAP Mares (Non-IAATO) was the authroized Operator), they did support and advise the operations during the expedition.

1) South Sandwich Trench
EYOS Expeditions planned, managed and lead an expedition to the South Sandwich trench which resulted in the detailed mapping of the entire trench using an EM-124 sonar aboard DSSV Pressure Drop. The ultra-high resolution data has been provided to the British Geological Survey and will be submitted for the General Bathymetric Chart of the Ocean (GEBCO). Several biological samples were taken from 7433m/24,388ft and are being analysed by Newcastle University. The first manned submersible dive to this deepest point of the Southern Ocean was made by DSV ‘Limiting Factor’.

2) NHK Science Broadcast
NHK TV (Japan) were successful on the EYOS Expeditions supported voyage which produced the first live stream broadcast in 4k resolution to an avid Japanese audience. The broadcasters touched on a range of science based Antarctic subjects from perspectives provided by helicopter mounted cineflex camera, ROV, SCUBA diver and land based camera teams.

You can find more information about these projects by visiting the links below.


https://fivedeeps.com/home/technology/sub/
This year, Quixote Expeditions participated in and supported science in many ways.

On *Ocean Tramp* two Guest Scientists were hosted on two separate journeys. One French researcher continued his investigations into penguin vocalizations. The research and trip were also tracked by the German Oceanographic Museum. The other guest scientist was affiliated with NASA and collected Tardigrades to understand their circadian rhythm and responses to light and temperature to be used for bio mechanical engineering in the future.

On *Hans Hansson* guests participated in the citizen science project Fjordphyto, collecting phytoplankton throughout the Antarctic fjords. *Hans Hansson* also supported the South Georgia Heritage Trust’s archeological trip to South Georgia focusing on the sealing era, with a circumnavigation of the island stopping and documenting many sites. Citizen scientists came along to help with the “dig”. Also on that trip, a coastal mapper associated with SAERI of the Falkland Islands joined – doing both high resolution drone mapping and ground validation for current remote sensor data.
R/V Australis - (Ocean Expeditions) had a very busy year in supporting Antarctic science, supporting various projects as detailed below.

**Search for Type-D voyage** - In January / February 2019, an international team of scientists set off onboard R/V Australis with the aim of being the first cetacean experts to positively identify and capture biopsies of the predicted to be new species - Type-D Killer Whales or common name suggested as sub-Antarctic Killer Whales. The team, lead by Bob Pitman have sent the samples for genetic analysis and will help determine whether this animal is indeed new to science. It has been suggested that this could be the largest undescribed animal left on the planet and a clear indication of how little we know about life in our southern oceans. As more species seem to be increasingly spiralling toward extinction, it's heartening to know that the ocean is home to more mysteries than we will ever know.

**Belgica 121 expedition** - In February / March 2019, nine Belgian government scientists set out onboard R/V Australis to conduct a dedicated multidisciplinary research voyage which was a biodiversity census of shallow water (<20m) marine life in Antarctica. The team worked at 14 sample stations, collected over 1,700 samples, totalling over 49,000 organisms, with 226 gear deployments - dredging, netting, bottom grabbing, at one point eDNA sampling at 400M below sea level, 38 SCUBA dives, all within 22 sampling days. With 12 different institutions & laboratories directly involved, the shallow water work is set to reveal previously unknown species, provide years of work and data for those involved and will be used to complement a lot of the work done in deeper waters by larger government vessels allowing us to better understand the entire Antarctic peninsula Eco system. More info at: [www.belgica121.be](http://www.belgica121.be)
**PolarTag** - Ben Wallis has also developed a polar wildlife tag sighting portal called [PolarTag.org](http://PolarTag.org). Users can submit photos of tags seen in the field - both Antarctic & Arctic - the georeferences image and accompanying data is then automatically sent to a curated list of scientists who are taking that species in the field. Once the tag owner has been found, the contributor receives historical information on the tag. More information can be found in the IAATO FOM. This will be presented in more detail during the citizen science presentation.

R/V Australis also contributed to the already IAATO approved platforms of HappyWhale, Fjordphyto, PolarTag and OLEX throughout the season.

### Unauthorized Yachts in Antarctica

For the third consecutive time, the Russian yacht Rusarc-Aurora was operating in the peninsula without a permit, and again seen and reported breaking treaty and IAATO guidelines. We consider this being unacceptable, as it damages the reputation of IAATO Operators, in particular the IAATO yacht community. We would like to see treaty members “have more teeth” when it comes to dealing with this and similar cases. We hope this year the competent authorities will be able to react with more strength.
Code of Conduct

The yacht committee was involved in writing the IAATO Code of Conduct, a document that will replace the Ship Etiquette document, and we trust this will be approved and endorsed during this AGM. In light of recent incidents, it seems highly important to have a clear document to help everyone and in particular newcomers understand what the minimum standards of courtesy and professionalism are.

We hope this document will help promote better relations and cooperation between all operators.
Tribute to Arnaud Dhallenne & Sophie Labruhe

As most of you are aware, we tragically lost two good friends and fellow sailors, who were swept off the yacht “Paradise” when it was knocked down by a rogue wave on March 5th 2019, as they were sailing back from South Georgia to Uruguay. Morgane Ursault, Arnaud’s partner, and the remaining crewmembers courageously sailed the yacht back to Stanley, Falkland Islands, where I was able to welcome and assist them.

Arnaud was born in France in 1952 and sailed his whole life, starting a long and distinguished career on Eric Tabarly’s Pen Duick VI during the first Whitbread around the world race in 1973. In the early 80’s, he started his own charter business and started offering trips around the world, on his own boat at first, and then on legendary yachts such as Pen Duick III & Pen Duick VI amongst others. A keen racer, he continued competing throughout his career, finishing 3rd in the Route du Rhum in 2006. Arnaud was also a loving father to three kids who admired their adventurous father, and is a very well respected seafarer. After we acquired Paradise together in 2008, he started spending more and more time sailing in the southern ocean, offering charters to Antarctica amongst other destinations.
Sophie was born in France in 1951 and studied political sciences and art history, graduating from the most prestigious school in France. An adventurous soul, she went hiking across South America for 2 years around 1975, traveling mostly on her own which in those days was almost unheard of. In 1977, she met Oleg Bely and decided to abandon a promising career to join him on a transatlantic crossing, having not sailed much before. She never stopped sailing and never had a home on land, raising their two children on the boat and sailing to Antarctica and South Georgia and all around the world as if it was just a thing anyone did.

Sophie & Oleg were amongst the first to offer yacht charters to Antarctica, aboard Kotick and then Kotick 2 in the early 80's, but for personal reasons chose never to join IAATO. Sophie was a very delicate and quiet person, yet the essence of strength itself and an inspiration for us all.

Not long before the tragedy, I had received an email from Arnaud telling me how happy he had been to visit South Georgia again. On this trip, Sophie was celebrating the 40th anniversary of her first visit to South Georgia. In the last pages of her journal, she wrote: “I am the ocean”.

Arnaud & Sophie loved the ocean so much you could see it in their eyes, and we can but hope that they have found peace in the one they spent the most time sailing on; the South Atlantic Ocean.

May you both rest in peace.