

Give nature a boost

Helping wildlife on your farm



This leaflet provides advice and encouragement to anyone who is interested in helping wildlife on their farm but is not sure where to start.

www.falklandsconservation.com

1 Protect good habitat

You can start small with a disinfectant footbath and a native plant garden, or manage a whole peninsula for wildlife – the important thing is **to make a start**. We've described key considerations under four headings:

1. Protect good habitat
2. Consider habitat restoration,
3. Biosecurity
4. Green and proud.

Fencing and biosecurity are key throughout.

i. Prime wildlife habitat: **Less than 1% of the Falklands' land area is rodent (rat, mouse, and rabbit) free with mature native plant cover**



- ☼ **89% of this prime wildlife habitat is privately owned.**
- ☼ Rats (and mice, cats and foxes) eat eggs, chicks and insects. Islands without them can home more than twice the amounts of birds and insects as infested islands.
- ☼ **80% of tussac habitat has been lost.** More than 34 species of birds breed here and it's full of native insects. Similarly vast bluegrass grasslands were once common across the islands.
- ☼ Prime wildlife habitat is where cute Cobb's wrens, tussac birds (both species unique to the Falklands), gutsy prions, and spectacular shearwaters breed most successfully.
- ☼ Prevent visitors from starting fires, or disturbing wildlife, and ensure they follow the Countryside Code and **avoid driving or trampling on bird burrows.**

If your farm includes islands with prime wildlife habitat celebrate them!

Protect them with good biosecurity.



A Magellanic penguin peers through dense tussac.

Good native plant habitat – sunshine cliffs! Falklands woolly daisies as far as the eye can see at Shallow Harbour Farm. These brilliant yellow flowers are unique to the Falklands (MARLANE MARSH)



Great wildlife habitat is rare & irreplaceable



ii. **Good native plant habitat** (even where there are rats, mice or carefully managed livestock)



☼ **Very carefully grazed land, and especially ungrazed land, can be home to rare plants, mature native species, and lots of insects and birds.**

☼ **Large plants and shrubs** provide super shelter for insects and birds, as well as perch sites away from cats and rodents.

☼ Falklands' tussac peat can be more than 10,000 years old, at Beauchene the **rate of peat accumulation was found to be around 1 metre in 1,000 years!** So it's really precious, and often it's blowing away...

☼ **It's not just tussac!** Other native plant habitats include bluegrass meadows, cushion plant cliffs, coral fern glades and mini-forests of fachine or boxwood. You may be aware of **exciting habitat on your farm** which could benefit from extra care – and perhaps attract visitors if you are a tourist destination - or Falklands Conservation could help you to identify special areas.

☼ **Fossil records show that there were no grazing mammals** on the Falklands until cattle were introduced in the 18th century. Our 14 endemic plants (these are plants found only in the Falklands) lived for thousands of years without grazing mammals. Most do not have defences like spines or terrific seed production and so they need protection from grazing to flourish - this is why species like native boxwood, snake plant and Falkland lavender are only found on cliff edges or in stone runs and mine fields. Fencing off some wildlife areas (and avoiding grazing new areas) allows these unique plants to spread and form their own special Falklands habitats.



Queen of the Falklands fritillary - the caterpillars of our native butterfly like to feed on the leaves of violets.

☼ Some native plants, including bluegrass, fachine and tussac can grow **where there are few livestock or grazing is carefully managed with good rest periods** (tussac will not survive continual grazing). Such plants can provide good food and cover for wildlife and livestock: continuing to carefully manage areas with these plants is important to prevent their degradation to diddle-dee, white grass or eroded land, - which provide less nutrition for livestock.

Fencing is key for excluding or managing livestock around good native plant habitat. Plans must include ongoing maintenance.

Short-eared owls like to feed and nest in tall grass, pictured here on bluegrass at Middle Island.

(MICKY REEVES)



2 Consider Restoration

Methods include: natural revegetation, planting tillers or small plants, or using a mixture of seeds and dung.

Information on these methods is available from other farmers and the Falklands Conservation website.

Plant
tussac and other
native species on
degraded land or
allow their natural
regeneration

- ✿ Where native species are planted to prevent erosion or support grazing they can provide livestock with food and shelter and prevent contamination of wool with peat or sand.
- ✿ Again, fencing is key as continuous grazing prevents most native plants from establishing. Many of our native species are slow growing, so you will need to be patient....
- ✿ Traditionally tussac has been used for restoration but you could try other species such as bluegrass, boxwood, cinnamon grass or Fuegian couch grass, and combinations of these species. If you intend to graze an area, first check that the species you plant will tolerate grazing.
- ✿ Wildlife benefits are greatest if you can roughly match the species planted to those which might be found naturally in the area being restored and try to use seeds or plants from your farm – if in doubt Falklands Conservation can help you identify suitable species.
- ✿ **Native plants are adapted to the Falklands environment** – once established they should not need fertilizing and can cope with dry summers.



Falkland Thrift on a clay patch at Cape Pembroke.

- ✿ The benefits of restoration include fighting climate change: **a hectare of pristine tussac stores similar amounts of carbon to a hectare of forest in the UK.**

All farms are different – trial and error is key. **Make a small start** with a range of different techniques and extend areas as you learn. **Grow for it!**

Planting tussac at
Elephant Beach
Farm.



3 Biosecurity

Taking a few simple steps can save you time, money, and protect our native wildlife

Biosecurity is about keeping out pests, diseases and invasive species.

It's everyone's responsibility, but is most likely to directly affect farms. Don't allow others to bring new pests or diseases to your farm.

Check

- ✿ Check vessels and cargo scrupulously for hitchhikers! Mice and insects can easily hide away.
- ✿ Check that boots and outdoor kit used elsewhere are free from soil, faeces, seeds or invertebrates.
- ✿ Be vigilant for new species, they may not be obvious. Chew marks, droppings or crop damage for example, may indicate insect or rodent pests.
- ✿ Report outbreaks of disease or suspected disease, or new species to the Department of Agriculture immediately.
- ✿ Check plants or soil for insects and weeds, especially if moving from Stanley to Camp.

Clean

- ✿ Use disinfectant foot dips and scrub footwear when moving between wildlife sites. Virkon® is an ideal biocide but in an emergency household bleach or disinfectant could be used.
- ✿ Thoroughly clean outdoor equipment which has been used off the farm.
- ✿ Make sure fishing equipment which has been used abroad is cleaned and completely dried before use (ideally new gear should be used).

Prevent

- ✿ Control rodents and use bait boxes in areas where vessels depart for pest free islands, or where goods are stored prior to departure.
- ✿ Transport and store supplies in rodent proof boxes.
- ✿ Monitor pest free areas. Have a plan and the equipment ready to promptly deal with issues or incursions.
- ✿ The Department of Agriculture can help you with a biosecurity plan for your farm, land or island. This will help you reduce the chance of introducing a new species, and allow a quick and effective response should a pest arrive.

Boast! Explain to visitors that by implementing these biosecurity measures they are helping to protect the environment. Everyone should feel good about that!

Cobb's wren are only found in the Falklands and can only breed on islands without rats and mice.

(JIM DUNCAN)



4 Green and proud!

**GROW
FOR
IT!**

Consumers love good stewardship stories so publicise yours:

take photos and share them on social media. Encourage tourists to do the same.
Think about hosting a Watch Group trip to enthuse children.



Consider hosting a Watch Group visit.



Hoe no! Thistles are a pest to agriculture. (BRIAN SUMMERS)

- ✿ We are all learning new techniques so don't be put off by failures – be brave and share your experiences for the benefit of others.
- ✿ Keep short notes of what, how and when you planted or fenced and what happened, otherwise it's easy to forget important details.
- ✿ Take lots of photographs: before and after shots from the same point are especially inspiring and help you to record changes.

Planting tussac for
the future at Elephant
Beach Farm.

Remember your camera!



More information

- ✿ Falklands Conservation's Habitats Officer Frin (habitatsrestore@conservation.org.fk), website and social media posts share information on restoration techniques and cool plant habitats.
- ✿ Phyl Rendell (Bleaker Island), Ben Bemsten (Elephant Beach) and Chris May (George, Barren and Speedwell Islands) are happy to share information about re-establishing and carefully grazing coastal tussock. Mike and Dale Evans at Spring Point Farm can provide tips on establishing bluegrass. Sonia Felton at Cape Dolphin and Cynthia Williams at Stanley Growers have grown many of our native plants from seed.
- ✿ Looking for inspiration? The Patricia Luxton and Lyn Blake Nature Reserves have great stands of native plants or download "Important Plant Areas of the Falkland Islands" to see a variety of different habitats, see native grasses at the Cape Dolphin Native Seed Hub.
- ✿ Falkland Islands Government's Biosecurity Officer can be reached on biosecurity@doa.gov.fk
- ✿ The Countryside Code is available from Falklands Conservation.
- ✿ Funding for schemes which help nature and the environment may be available through: Department of Agriculture's Farm Improvement Plans, Falklands Conservation's Small Grants Scheme and the Falkland Islands Government Policy Unit's Environmental Studies Budget, please contact those organisations for more information.

TOP TO BOTTOM Fabulous hairy daisies and snake plants (MIKE MORRISON) are only found in the Falklands; dusty millers and arrow-leaved marigolds prefer damp ground while common violets and pale maidens like drier heath.

Ladies slipper – only found in the Falklands and well adapted to grow in tough conditions – Cheyl



FALKLANDS CONSERVATION



- Works with land managers, providing support for practical conservation work including tussac planting and control of invasive plants.
- Shares information on habitat restoration trials and techniques.
- Runs the Watch Group to enthuse young people about nature in the Falklands.
- Awards conservation grants for local wildlife projects.
- Provides advice on wildlife issues.
- Maintains a comprehensive Falkland Islands wildlife recording database.



SARAH CROFTS

Falklands Conservation has worked to protect the wildlife of the Falklands Islands for over 25 years. Based in Stanley, the charity now has over 550 members worldwide, a flourishing junior group and many volunteers. The Falkland Islands are small and remote with limited resources but with hugely important wildlife to protect. Falklands Conservation is heavily dependent on public support to fund its conservation programmes. You can help us by making a donation or by becoming a member. We welcome visitors to our offices in Stanley, or you may find out more about us on our website (below).

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We belong to BirdLife International,
the global partnership of bird
conservation organisations



To join Falklands Conservation, adopt a penguin, leave a legacy, or find out more about our work, go to

www.falklandsconservation.com