

# Falklands Conservation Annual Review

## July 2016–June 2017

Falklands Conservation is a full Partner of BirdLife International, making a significant contribution to the BirdLife Global Marine Programme and working closely with the UK Partner, the RSPB.

**The work we do reflects our mission to work in partnership with the local and international Falkland Islands community to conserve nature.**

### Board Of Trustees

Roger Spink (FC Chairman), Henry Robinson (FC Vice Chairman), Mandy Shepherd (UK Vice Chair), Dr Paul Brewin (FI Vice Chair), Tym Marsh (Hon Treasurer), Keith Biles (FI Hon Treasurer), Thomas Blake, Sally Blake, Tim Carr, Jan Cheek, Dr Colin Clubbe, Prof John Croxall, Ross James, Steve Massam, Ian Moncrieff, Louise Taylor, Sally-Ann Wilson – Co-opted Aug 2016.

#### Vice Presidents

Sir David Attenborough, Julian Fitter, Robert Gibbons, Peter Harrison, Rebecca Ingham, Robin Woods, Mark Carwardine – as of Feb 2017.

#### Patron

HRH Prince Andrew The Duke of York.

### FC Staff Update:

**Full-time staff over the year:** Dr Esther Bertram continued as our Chief Executive Officer, and Farrah Peck remained as Office Manager in the Falklands. Dr Andrew Stanworth continued as the Conservation Manager, and Sarah Crofts as Conservation Officer. David Spivack continued in his role as UK Director, and Elizabeth Milston continued as the Community Engagement Manager. Frin Ross joined the team as the permanent Habitats Officer in Jul 2016 following on from her project work as the Habitat Restoration Officer 2015-2016. Angela Clarke was the Administrative Assistant up until Jan 2017, Jessica Harte was Temporary Administrative Assistant for the period Jan – Feb 2017 before Pamela

Quilodran Jelbes joined the team as the new Administrative Officer in Mar 2017.

**We also had the following project staff:** Frin Ross completed her project employment as the Habitats Restoration Officer, and Caroline Weir joined the team as Sei Whale Project Officer in Oct 2016. Throughout the year Helen Marsh very kindly provided voluntary support to our charity as the Herbarium Curator, and Susan Thacker continued to provide voluntary administrative support to the UK office in Sandy.

With this staff complement, together with the assistance of many dedicated volunteers both locally and overseas, we have had a successful year. We thank each and every one of them.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

*Here is an overview of this year's achievements:*

### IMPROVING FC EFFECTIVENESS

#### People

We have increased our investment in our staff, without whom, none of our work would be possible, through individual and organisational focussed training opportunities. We have a strong set of Trustees who work hard to ensure we are compliant with the charity commission and our organisational objectives. We have a large, worldwide network of over 50 members through which we are able to promote our work. This year we have increased emphasis on new recruitment initiatives, and expanded our generous group of corporate supporters.

#### Premises

Our main conservation operations are managed from our head office at Jubilee Villas in Stanley. Our two Jubilee Villas on the waterfront, acquired in 2007-08, provide the base from which to run our activities, with a complementary office for the UK Director based at The Gatehouse in Sandy, Bedfordshire (kindly supplied by the RSPB). We are working hard towards our vision of a purpose-built headquarters in Stanley with a dedicated

space for Watch Group activities. The fundraising appeal for this initiative was launched at St James's Palace by our Patron HRH The Duke of York in Jun 2016.

#### Governance

This year the Trustees considered it prudent to update the charity's foundation document, to ensure that the governance of the charity keeps pace with changes in UK Charity Law. The previous Memorandum & Articles of Association we replaced with completely new Articles, which were agreed by Members at the AGM on 1 Dec 2016 and taken into use with effect of this date.

#### Fundraising

We have been working to update our fundraising plan to ensure we have sustainable income streams in place and have been undertaking associated communications planning. Sales from our small gift shop at Jubilee Villas, and our webshop, continue to supplement our fundraising efforts. We hosted 160 guests at our annual Charity Ball which is our main fundraising event on the islands.

### EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Our Small Grants Scheme supported local conservation efforts of a native plants garden at Mare Harbour, eradication of invasive mammals on Bense and Little Bense Islands, and to fence eroded land at West Lagoons ready for tussac planting. We had a display at the Falkland Islands Farmers' Week Expo, had Herbarium and Habitat Restoration Trial Plot open days, and hosted an evening meal. We arranged volunteer weekends for the planting of native tussac grass on eroded ground, and for the removal of invasive thistles. Numerous public talks, community events, print and radio appearances were held throughout the year. Our members received two issues of our high quality magazine, *Wildlife Conservation in the Falkland Islands*, as well as two copies of our newsletter. We continued to keep our social media up-to-date with the news and results of our latest work, and began work to redevelop the current website.

#### Watch Group

Our efforts to build appreciation and understanding of wildlife and conservation continued through the

work of the Watch Group (the junior branch of our charity), which had a record number of 60 members this year. With the generous support of the Standard Chartered Bank, we were able to take children to many of the more remote parts of the Falklands, and to maintain a programme of activities throughout the year. Their activities were recorded in the quarterly *Rocky's News* newsletter. Future plans to incorporate an education centre for the Watch Group into our new building continue.

## PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION AND CONSERVATION ACTION

We continued to provide environmental advice to government, industry and other stakeholders in the Falklands and abroad. We continued to be represented on the Board of the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI). We commented on several elements of the oil companies' operations through the exploration phase to encourage best practice to be undertaken in the Falklands. We maintained our membership of the Falkland Islands Offshore Hydrocarbons Environmental Forum, and the Seabird Bycatch Committee. We attended the Falkland Island Government (FIG) Environment Committee as formal members, and worked with FIG in the development of strategies within the Falkland Islands Biodiversity Framework. Outside of the Islands, the Conservation Manager attended the annual plenary of the Forum for the Conservation of the Patagonian Sea, the UK Director and CEO attended the Joint Ministerial Council Reception in London, and the UK Director ensured we had a high profile at the UK's well-attended annual BirdFair.

### Strengthening biosecurity and invasive policy and practice

We worked closely with FIG in strengthening biosecurity legislation and encouraging an integrated approach to invasive management, and with Island LandCare to carry out practical invasive control through thistle eradication visits to Saunders Island with the support of our volunteers.

### Ensuring leading practice being undertaken for onshore and offshore development

#### Developing Hydrocarbon Policy Frameworks

With funding and support from the RSPB, we have been working with industry and government to develop policy frameworks that recognise the significance of biodiversity in the Falkland

Islands, incorporate it into industry decision making, ensure its protection, and also to provide mechanisms for facilitating responsible operation and leaving a positive environmental legacy from industry operations.

### Oiled Seabird Rehabilitation Facility

The charity successfully cared for and released a low number of oiled penguins over the year including gentoo and Magellanic penguins. A number of volunteers were trained to help care for penguins, as well as visits arranged for local school and youth groups. A community project was organised with the British Forces South Atlantic Islands (MoD) assisting with on-going improvements to the facility. In collaboration with Detroit Zoological Society design work started on new information panels and signs.

### Driving forward habitat restoration and land management

#### Habitat Restoration and Outreach

This new three-year John Ellerman Foundation funded project supports habitat protection and restoration work including youth education and tussac planting. Importantly, it also supports and show-cases practical restoration work led by landowners, with a focus on restoration using native plants. Outreach included print and social media, public talks, stalls at agricultural shows, information leaflets, and planting trips and field trips. Research continues to monitor a subset of restoration trials set up in the Darwin Initiative project and to push forward new trials with seed-based restoration and tiller planting using species other than tussac. The Cape Dolphin Native Seed Hub is now established and run by Sonia and Andy Felton with support from Ben Berntsen.

#### Rural Environmental Engagement

Funded by the Rural Development Strategy (administered by the Falkland Islands Development Corporation), we have worked with farmers to promote land management practices that have positive environmental impacts. Detailed consultation with the farming community highlighted the importance of proven farm-led initiatives that illustrate local projects and expertise. In response we have shared farm-led conservation-minded projects through the production of 'case-studies', farm visits, presentations, and stalls at the Agricultural Show and Farmers' Week. These have been well received and generate considerable interest with new farmers. This work is now continued through our Ellerman project (above).



TOP TO BOTTOM:  
Over four hectares of tussac planted at Sea Lion Island; Bill Dawson and volunteers planting native plants at East Cove Military Port; Monitoring Beaver Pond tussac plantation at Sea Lion Island in October; Invasive spear thistle eradication at Saunders Island in March; Meet the FC team – left to right Esther, Andy, Pame, Caroline, Farrah, Liz, Sarah and Frin.

## Practical Management of Sea Lion Island Nature Reserve

We continued to undertake the practical management of Sea Lion Island Nature Reserve in accordance with our agreement with the Falkland Islands Development Corporation. As part of this programme, and in collaboration with the manager of Sea Lion Lodge we implemented: rodent monitoring, non-native plant control, habitat restoration trials with novel native plant species and techniques, and a very large tussac planting trip (over four hectares of eroded ground planted by 29 people including British Forces South Atlantic Islands (MoD), Elephant Seal Research Group and FC Volunteers), and monitored long-term fixed-point habitat restoration sites. We produced four reports on these activities including a summary report with management recommendations.

## Enhanced marine management

### Developing a Site-based Conservation Approach for Sei Whales at Berkeley Sound, Falkland Islands

This EU BEST 2.0 project takes a site-based approach to further understanding sei whale abundance and distribution in Berkeley Sound, the busiest shipping harbour in the Islands. The fieldwork component was carried out

in the Berkeley Sound candidate Key Biodiversity Area between January and June 2017, consisting of aerial surveys, boat surveys and shore-based watches. A spatial dataset was collected on sei whale (and other cetacean species) occurrence and will establish a photo-identification catalogue of distinctive individuals. Public awareness through local media, developing a code of conduct for marine users, information leaflets and informative boards on cetaceans is ongoing.

### Genetic sampling of Endangered Sei Whales

With funding support from the RSPB, sei whale genetic work can be carried out alongside the main BEST 2.0 project. Biopsy sampling was carried out under a research licence from FIG, with the collection of small tissue samples from 13 individuals in Berkeley Sound. Additionally, genetic material was collected from whale bones, stranded animals and potentially can be extracted from faecal samples collected at sea. Sample analysis will be carried out via a collaboration with the British Antarctic Survey.

### The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme

The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme, supported by FIG's

Environmental Studies Budget (ESB), continued into its 28th year. This is a survey of southern rockhopper, gentoo and king penguin colonies, together with black-browed albatross, southern giant petrel with the recent addition of imperial shag and Falkland skua. This year was notable for an overall decrease (by around a third) in breeding pairs of southern rockhopper penguin, gentoo penguin and black-browed albatross. It is likely that associated environmental changes in the marine ecosystem led to a period of reduced food availability to seabirds, with some birds deciding to skip breeding altogether (deferred or abstained breeding), and helps to explain, in part, the lower numbers of breeding pairs observed by the programme this year. Breeding success across the species and sites was variable, but on the whole was lower than the previous year and below the yearly averages. Monitoring data from the programme has already proved invaluable in assessing long-term trends, particularly in understanding the significance of short-term declines in seasonal performance, and for informing IUCN Red List assessments. The gentoo penguin was down-listed on the IUCN Red List from Near Threatened to Least Concern.

# Plans for the Future

*This being an election year we will be working hard with candidates and newly elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to ensure the natural environment, on which we all depend so heavily, is considered at the highest levels of decision making. We will also formalise our organisational Business Plan 2017–20 which will drive improvements in our Effectiveness, and support our education, outreach and Conservation Strategy.*

## Ensuring improved FC effectiveness

- With our UK Director, David Spivack, leading our fundraising plans we will continue focusing our efforts on unrestricted funding for the organisation.
- With the oversight of our Office Manager, Farrah Peck, we will ensure the day to day running of the office and its facilities, the organisational financial management and HR processes are working smoothly.
- To increase our abilities to work effectively with our Watch Group and the community, we will be focusing fundraising efforts on our new Watch Group and FC office building.
- We will continue to benefit from strong Governance with our committed board of Trustees.

## The engagement and involvement of the community through outreach, member and volunteer events

- Under the direction of our Community Engagement Manager, Liz Milston, we will be continuing our successful work with the Watch Group and our adult volunteer outreach activities, which this year, once again, will have activities that are directly focused around our key conservation priorities.
- Helen Marsh will be continuing as the voluntary Herbarium Curator maintaining the National Herbarium to increase knowledge of Falkland's species.

We will continue to focus efforts on our priority conservation activities which uses a threats based approach to lead our conservation efforts to 2020. Our Conservation Manager, Andy Stanworth, will continue managing our conservation team and leading our conservation activities. Our Conservation Officer, Sarah Crofts, will continue delivering our seabird focussed field-based work and our Habitats Officer, Frin Ross will be focusing on habitat restoration.

## WE WILL FOCUS AROUND THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

- Advocating for environmental ambition and best practice with FIG and key stakeholders on practices that impact on the natural environment.
- Championing through our networks those taking positive action for nature.
- Building engagement and understanding of our members and the local community on key issues affecting the natural environment.

## THE CONSERVATION PRIORITY AREAS ARE LISTED BELOW:

### Strengthening biosecurity and invasives policies, procedures and management

#### PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION:

- We will work closely with government in strengthening biosecurity legislation and practice and encouraging an integrated approach to invasive management.

#### CONSERVATION ACTION:

- We will support landowners to carry out practical invasive action – currently focussed on thistle eradication on Saunders Island with Island LandCare.

## Ensuring leading practice for onshore and offshore developments

### PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION:

- We will provide independent, science-based scrutiny of large-scale development proposals, with a special focus on the oil and gas sector and look to ensure best practice for all developments.

### CONSERVATION ACTION:

- We will respond to oiled seabird emergencies.

## Terrestrial habitat restoration and land management

### PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION:

- We will provide a vision for habitat restoration and protection and work with FIG to strengthen agri-environment

finance and initiatives that support that vision.

### CONSERVATION ACTION:

- We will continue our conservation collaborative work with land owners and on FC-owned islands.
- We will be working with landowners to share learning on habitat restoration.

## Enhancing marine management – This will be an area of growth, focussed on flagship species and management planning with community engagement as a key component for vulnerable marine species and habitats.

### PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION:

- We will work to ensure key threats are identified and contingency

planning is in place to underpin marine management decision making.

- We will strive to ensure there is strong community collaboration in Marine Spatial Planning processes.

### CONSERVATION ACTION:

- To better understand endangered sei whales and ship movements we will be focusing research around Berkeley Sound, Queen Charlotte and King George Bays.
- To monitor key indicators of marine management we will continue our Annual Seabird Monitoring Program.

*We have an exciting election year ahead of us, and much we want to achieve, none of which would be possible without your support!*

## Thanks & Acknowledgements – *We could not have achieved so much without you!*

Organisations we have been involved with over the year are: the Forum for the Conservation of the Patagonian Sea and Areas of Influence, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the Millennium Seed Bank, Wildlife Conservation Society, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Detroit Zoological Society, the British Antarctic Survey, Oxford University, University of Maine, the International Network for Seed-based Restoration, IUCN Peatland Program, the UK Ministry of Defence, Australian Antarctic Division, Stanley Nurseries, the Elephant Seal Research Group, New Island Conservation Trust, Island LandCare, the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, the Rural Business Association, the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute, Falkland Islands Company Ltd., Stanley Services Ltd., Ecotours and Cape Dolphin Farm.

Major supporters of our project work (in terms of funds, help or advice – often all three) in the past year were the Falkland Islands Government, the UK Government

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, including their Darwin Plus programmes and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the RSPB, Standard Chartered Bank, the John Ellerman Foundation, the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, the British Antarctic Survey, the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BEST) in European overseas territories programme.

Additional supporters of our core activities were land managers across the Falkland Islands, The H.B. Allen Charitable Trust, The Van NESTE Foundation, A.S. Butler Charitable Trust, Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens, Drusillas Park, and the SeaLife London Aquarium.

For the Charity Ball held in Sept 2016, we would like to thank our major sponsor, Consolidated Fisheries Ltd, and additional sponsors; Briggs Marine, the Falkland Islands Development

Corporation, South American Atlantic Services, Redback Consultancy, Lindblad Expeditions and One Ocean Expeditions for their generous contributions. Thanks also go to local tourism providers, artists and donors for contributions to auction prizes and the raffle, and the Seafish Chandlery, The Malvina House Hotel, and many other individuals and volunteers for their support of this successful event.

For substantial donations to the Building for the Future fundraising campaign to date, we would like to thank Standard Chartered Bank, Falkland Islands Government, Premier Oil, Noble Energy, JK Marine, Caribbean Alliance, John Hellowell, Henry Kenner, Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens, Morrison's Construction, Frits W Olivier and the Falkland Islands Company Ltd.

**Of course, none of our work would be possible without our members, both corporate and individual, who support our important conservation work with generous donations, thoughtful ideas, advice, and their belief in the work we undertake. We wish to thank you all.**

Falklands Conservation is a UK registered charity no 1073859, a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales no 03661322, and registered as an Overseas Company in the Falkland Islands. Registered office: 1 Waterloo Close, Abbotsley, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 6UX, UK.

Cape Dolphin Seed Hub – nurturing native seeds for future habitat regeneration.

