

Falklands Conservation Review of the Year 2013-14

(July 2013–June 2014)



Our 2013–14 work programme, underpinned by the 2010–19 Strategic Plan, encompasses Conservation and Research; Protected Areas and Policy Advocacy; Education and Outreach; and Capacity Building. The work we do reflects our mission to engage and empower the people of the Falkland Islands to take action with us to conserve biodiversity and manage landscapes and seascapes for the benefit of nature and people.

Our conservation operations are managed from our office at Jubilee Villas in Stanley.

FC staff update

Dr David Doxford replaced Dr James Fenton as our Chief Executive Officer in July. Dr Andrew Stanworth continued as our Conservation Officer, Sarah Crofts as Conservation Science Officer, Farrah Peck as Office Manager in the Falklands and Sarah Brennan as our UK Executive Officer. Roxanne King joined as Administrative Assistant and left in June to continue her degree course in the UK and, in May, handed over to Elizabeth Milston. John Carlin was Watch Group Coordinator until his resignation at the end of the field season.

We have also had several project staff over the year: Clare Cockwell, Protected Areas Strategy Officer; Micky Reeves, Raptor Project Officer; Freya Gill, Assistant Biodiversity Planner; Alexandra Davey, Habitat Restoration Officer; Carol Peck, Marketing Officer; and Dafydd Crabtree joined the team in May as the Lower Plants Project Officer.

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.

Vice Presidents: Sir David Attenborough, Julian Fitter, Robert Gibbons, Peter Harrison, Rebecca Ingham and Robin Woods.

Board of Trustees as at 30 June 2014

Henry Robinson (Chairman), Mandy Shepherd (Vice Chair), Darren Christie (FI Chairman – resigned May 2014), Roger Spink (FI Vice Chair), Tym Marsh (Hon Treasurer), Keith Biles (FI Hon Treasurer), Sally Blake, Paul Brewin, Tim Carr, Jan Cheek, Colin Clubbe, John Croxall, Michael Evans, Bill Featherstone (resigned Nov 2013), Edward Maltby, Steve Massam, Carol Miller, Ian Moncrieff, David Spivack and Louise Taylor.

Here are some of the year's highlights:

The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme

The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme, supported by the Falkland Islands Government's (FIG) Environmental Studies Budget (ESB), continued into its 25th year. This is a survey of

rockhopper, gentoo and king penguin populations, together with black-browed albatross and southern giant petrel; its long run of data is proving invaluable for assessing long-term trends. This year has seen considerable regional variability in both breeding pair numbers and breeding success. However, there remains an apparent upward trend in breeding pairs for all monitored species.

The Black-browed Albatross Demographic Study

The Black-browed Albatross Demographic Study, again supported by the ESB, continued for an eighth year on Steeple Jason. Adult birds and chicks within the study site were ringed, and the information will be useful in the long term in assessing the survival of individual birds.

Tracking cormorants

In summer 2013–14, a small project was undertaken to investigate the two species of Falkland shags (imperial and rock) by deploying GPS trackers and dive loggers on breeding birds at two island locations: FC-owned Middle Island and WCS-owned Steeple Jason. The data reveal how shags utilise their inshore environment and will help contribute to the management of potential inshore developments. The project is funded by The Seabird Group (UK) and FIG ESB with assistance from British Antarctic Survey.

The Falkland Islands Raptors Project

This project, funded by the Darwin Initiative, aims to provide a scientific basis for government policy regarding the management of conflicts between raptors and rural livelihoods in the Falkland Islands, particularly sheep farming.

The project has completed its second year. Fitting GPS units to striated caracaras has been achieved after a few problems getting the units to stay on the birds. A population census of the north-west islands was carried out on striated caracaras, along with continued banding.

Interviews with stakeholders continue and this work is expected to be complete in the next couple of months, once the answers from questionnaires on farming and raptor interactions in the Falklands have been analysed.



Falkland Islands Protected Areas Strategy – Cooperative Management of Biological Diversity

This OTEP-funded project is now into its third and final year and, on behalf of FIG, aims to provide a framework for building a comprehensive network of terrestrial protected areas.

We signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Falkland Islands Development Corporation to undertake the practical management of Sea Lion Island Nature Reserve.

Biodiversity Action Planning in the Falkland Islands

Biodiversity Action Planning in the Falkland Islands is a two-year Darwin-funded project in partnership with FIG and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Its purpose is to review the current management system for delivering biodiversity action in the Falkland Islands and devise an effective means of prioritising action and allocating resource. In its first year, following the completion of a review of Falkland Islands Action Planning, the project has held workshops in the Falklands and Ascension, where the project shared the review findings and expertise, and engaged stakeholders in guiding the project forward.

Inshore Cetaceans of the Falkland Islands

In late February and March 2014, we conducted the first dedicated cetacean survey in the inshore waters of the Falkland Islands, through funding provided by the Darwin Challenge Fund.

The primary objective of this project was to establish basic survey parameters on whale and dolphin occurrence rates

rather than provide absolute population estimates. Peale's and Commerson's dolphins, as well as sei whales, were included in the survey.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre

The team successfully cared for and released a number of oiled penguins over the year. Our rehabilitation centre is still a work-in-progress, but the pool has already proved invaluable for the recovering penguins.

Marine Debris

The first Island-wide quantitative survey of marine debris at the Falklands was started in the 2013–14 summer with 122 beaches surveyed or 33 km of coastline across the archipelago, including many of the offshore islands. The surveys will be completed this upcoming summer with a focus on East and West mainland, whilst also providing opportunities for FC volunteers and members to get out and about with FC. The project is part-funded by FIG ESB.

Marketing

With funding from the RSPB, we started a project looking at activities to help raise our public profile in the Islands and beyond and to increase unrestricted income.

Watch Group

Our efforts to build appreciation and understanding of wildlife and conservation continued through the work of our Watch Group. We also started to raise funds to build an environmental education centre in Stanley.

Future plans for 2014–15

Drawing upon our Strategic Plan 2010-19, the Trustees have approved an ambitious workplan for the coming year under the direction of a new Chief Executive Officer, who will be joining the team in the new year. We will continue with the activities and projects outlined above as well as two new Darwin Plus-funded projects on lower plants and habitat restoration. We will also continue to provide independent, science-based scrutiny of large-scale development proposals, with a special focus on the oil and gas sector. Other activities include conservation management work on Sea Lion Island, arranging member and volunteer events, maintaining the National Herbarium, responding to wildlife emergencies, and providing technical advice to the Marine Spatial Planning project led by the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI). We will continue to fundraise for our new environmental education building at the heart of the community and aim to complete the fitting-out of the wildlife rehabilitation facility. As in previous years, we will be represented on the Environment Committee, Environmental Mainstreaming Group, Fisheries By-catch Committee, Offshore Hydrocarbons Environmental Forum and the SAERI Board.

FACING PAGE GPS trackers and dive loggers were used on imperial shags to find out how they use their inshore environment.

RIGHT Freya Gill cleaning an oiled king penguin found at Surf Bay. This process is repeated daily until the bird is able to begin preening to re-waterproof its feathers, which can take several weeks.



Our thanks and acknowledgements – we could not have achieved so much without you!

Major supporters of our work (in terms of funds, help or advice, often all three) in the past year were the Falkland Islands Government, UK Government's Overseas Territories Environment Programme, the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, including their Darwin Initiative, Darwin Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus programmes, the RSPB, the Royal Botanic Gardens – Kew, Wildlife Conservation Society, BirdLife International, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Boise State University, the British Antarctic Survey, Oxford University, National Museum Wales, Sea Mammal Research Unit, Detroit Zoological Society, People's Trust for Endangered Species, The Seabird Group, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, The H.B. Allen Charitable Trust, A.S. Butler Charitable Trust, Polar Cruises, Sea Life London Aquarium, Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens, Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens, Standard Chartered Bank, Malvina House Hotel, Falkland Islands Holidays, Stanley Growers, the John Cheek Trust, Beaver Island LandCare, and Falkland Islands Community School.

For the Charity Ball we would like to thank our major sponsor, Consolidated Fisheries Ltd, and other sponsors, Morrisons Falklands Ltd, Arch Henderson, Premier Oil and SAAS; One Ocean Expeditions, UK Hydrographic Office, Malvina House Hotel, Government House, Noble Energy, FIGAS,

SMSG and local tourism providers and artists for contributions to auction prizes; the Waterfront Hotel, Harris Building Services and BFSAI for spot prizes; and Seafish Chandlery, Falkland Islands Company, Bitter Sweet and South Atlantic Trading and many individuals for their donations to this successful event.

Of course, none of our work would be possible without our Members, 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, including our many penguin adopters.

CONTACT DETAILS

Falkland Islands:
41 Ross Road, Stanley

Tel: (+500) 22247

UK:
14 East Hatley, Sandy,
Beds SG19 3JA

Tel: (+44) (0)1767 650639

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Registered office: 14 East Hatley, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 3JA, UK.

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CENTRE PAGES: Imperial shag – *Ruedi Abbühl*;
Oiled king penguin – *Andrew Stanworth*. BACK: *James Fenton*.

