

Falklands Conservation Annual Review 2014–15

Our 2014–15 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 primarily run from our office at Jubilee Villas, Stanley, Falkland Islands.

FC Staff Update

Dr Esther Bertram replaced Dr David Doxford as our Chief Executive Officer in January 2015. Prof Michael Harte was interim Chief Executive Officer from July to September 2014. Dr Andrew Stanworth continued as our Conservation Officer, Sarah Crofts as Conservation Science Officer, and Farrah Peck as Office Manager in the Falklands. Sarah Brennan was our UK Executive Officer until February 2015, when she was replaced by David Spivack as the newly-appointed UK Director. Elizabeth Milston continued as Administrative Assistant until becoming the new appointment of Community Engagement Manager in August 2014. Victoria Collier joined as the new Administrative Assistant in September 2014. Charlotte O'Horo and Nancy Locke

temporarily joined the team as Charity Ball Organiser and Assistant Charity Ball Organiser respectively, for the period May – October 2014.

We have also had the following project staff over the year: Clare Cockwell, Protected Areas Strategy Officer until Sept 2014 when she moved on to complete an MSc in Biodiversity, Conservation and Management at the University of Oxford; Micky Reeves, Raptor Project Officer; Freya Gill, Assistant Biodiversity Planner until Feb 2015; Stuart Smith, Habitat Restoration Officer; and Dafydd Crabtree, Lower Plants Project Officer. Throughout the year Helen Marsh very kindly provided voluntary support to our charity as the Herbarium Curator. 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 2015

Roger Spink (FC Chairman), Henry Robinson (FC Vice Chairman), Mandy Shepherd (UK Vice Chair), Paul Brewin (FI Vice Chair), Tym Marsh (Hon Treasurer), Keith Biles (FI Hon Treasurer), Thomas Blake, Ross James, Sally Blake, Tim Carr, Jan Cheek, Colin Clubbe, John Croxall, Edward Maltby, Steve Massam, Ian Moncrieff, Louise Taylor.

Here are some of the year's highlights:

Offices

In the past year, due to the expansion of the team, our volunteer accommodation became additional office space. Plans for both expanding our office space and building a new Watch Group building changed due to an opportunity arising to become part of the Historic Dockyard development in the centre of Stanley. Sales from our small gift shop at Jubilee Villas, and our webshop, continue to supplement our fundraising efforts, while enabling us to engage with people from around the world about our important work.

Policy Advocacy

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 of the oil companies' Environmental Statements, and Oil Spill Contingency Plans for offshore oil prospecting. We maintained our membership of the Falkland Islands Offshore Hydrocarbons Environmental Forum, the Seabird Bycatch Committee,

and the Environmental Mainstreaming Group. We attended FIG's Environment Committee as formal members, and took part in the Falkland Islands Biodiversity Strategy Review. Outside of the Islands, the Conservation Officer attended the annual plenary of the Forum for the Conservation of the Patagonian Sea, and the UK Executive Officer ensured we had a high profile at the UK's well-attended annual Birdfair. We also provided support to SAERI on their gap analysis and marine spatial planning projects, and Kew's terrestrial climate change assessment of the Falkland Islands.

Education and Outreach

Our Small Grants Scheme was again available for landowners to utilise for agri-environmental benefits. We had a display at the Falkland Islands Farmers' Week Expo, gave a presentation 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. In addition to numerous public talks, community events, print and radio appearances, we hosted 160 guests at our annual Charity Ball which is now seen as

one of the high points of Stanley's social calendar – as well as being our main fundraising event on the islands. Our members received two issues of our high quality magazine, *Wildlife Conservation in the Falkland Islands*, as well as copies of our quarterly newsletter. We continued to keep our website and social media up-to-date with the news and results of our latest work.

The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme

The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme, supported by FIG's Environmental Studies Budget (ESB), continued into its 26th year. This is a survey of southern 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, as is often the case, has seen considerable regional variability in both breeding pair numbers and breeding success. However, breeding pairs for monitored species appear stable or increasing, with some species, such as black-browed albatross, having had a very high breeding success.

The Black-browed Albatross Demographic Study

The Black-browed Albatross Demographic Study, again supported by the ESB, continued for a ninth year on Steeple Jason. Adults and chicks new to the study site were ringed, whilst the return of those birds previously ringed was recorded to allow estimation of survival rates. Estimated adult survival rates for the study birds appear comparable to other black-browed albatrosses both within the Falklands and across their breeding range.

Tracking White-chinned Petrels

A collaborative project with British Antarctic Survey and Paulo Catry funded by the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, which saw trackers attached to adult white-chinned petrels at two sites in the Falklands and at South Georgia. The Falklands work aims to provide more information on the movements of the small white-chinned petrel population in the Falklands and establish links with other populations through DNA analysis. It is aimed to retrieve the trackers this coming year.

The Falkland Islands Raptors Project

This recently completed three year project, funded by the Darwin Initiative, has provided new scientific information as well as helping to guide policy regarding raptors in the Falkland Islands. The project outputs included; an island-wide census of striated caracara (the population had increased), a species action plan for striated caracara, as well as a report that will guide government policy decisions in regards to raptors within rural livelihoods in the Falkland Islands, particularly sheep farming. Over 1,000 individual striated caracara were banded with unique leg rings, as well as seven birds with satellite trackers. The projects' partner, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in the USA, will continue to utilise this data and continue with research studies on striated caracaras at the project's study sites.



Volunteers take part in the Penguin Rehabilitation DIY day held in February 2015.

Falkland Islands Protected Areas Strategy – Cooperative Management of Biological Diversity

This three year OTEP-funded project completed earlier this year. Extensive stakeholder engagement fed into the production of a framework for building a comprehensive network of terrestrial protected areas in the Islands, as well as a range of tools for the management and assessment of sites. The recommendations from the project are under consideration by FIG.

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 we facilitated two successful volunteer tussac planting trips on the Island, maintained and monitored the rat baiting stations, and monitored long-term fixed-point habitat restoration sites.

An Inventory of Falkland Islands Bryophytes and Lichens

In the first year of this two-year Darwin Plus funded project, a fully functional laboratory for bryophyte and lichen study was set up at the Falklands Conservation office. This includes a compound and stereo microscope, dissection kits, chemicals and literature to aid in identification. Specialists visited for a three week survey of the Falkland Islands, and provided a moss and lichens workshop for the public. A 'field day' for children was held at Fox Bay School on West Falkland. Over 60 species of lichen were newly recorded for the islands, including between eight to twelve species that are new to science. Twelve new moss species were also newly recorded for the Falklands. Growing monthly is the lower plants herbarium, to be used as a reference collection for future studies. The project officer also attended a moss workshop in Oregon, USA.

Watch Group children observing striated caracara on a trip to Saunders island in March 2015.



Building Capacity for Habitat Restoration in the Falkland Islands

In the first year of this two-year Darwin Plus funded project, an island-wide trial has been established to investigate the effectiveness of using native seeds as a re-vegetation tool. Four trial sites were set up at various locations around East Falkland, using a variety of seed mixes and covering materials. To support future potential re-vegetation using native seeds, a native seed hub at Stanley Growers was created to rear seeds locally on a small-scale. Wild native seeds were also collected from around the Falklands, particularly from islands on West Falkland. World Soil Day was observed by planting native shrubs with local school children in Stanley. Talks to local schools and community groups were also completed as part of the project's outreach element, and the project officer attended two international conferences focused on restoring natural habitats.

Biodiversity Action Planning in the Falkland Islands

This two-year Darwin-funded project in partnership with FIG and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew concluded this year. The project completed a review of Biodiversity Action Planning in the Islands and made recommendations for changes to the current system, many of which are in the process of being adopted by FIG as part of a National Biodiversity Strategy Review. Through workshops and stakeholder engagement the project also devised a method by which to prioritise actions to aid optimal use of resource – critical for an Overseas Territory with

a small population. A digital planning tool was also developed, currently being trialled by FIG, with the view to it being adopted to manage biodiversity planning in the Islands.

Oiled Seabird Rehabilitation Facility

The team successfully cared for and released 10 oiled penguins over the year; an unusual amount of oiled gentoo and king penguins were reported by landowners at the north of the Falklands in the winter months. The facility was formally opened in March by the Governor of the Falkland Islands. The facility is also providing capacity for the offshore oil industry's Oil Spill Response Plans.

Marine Debris

This project, part-funded by the ESB, is the first attempt to quantify the type, source and amount of marine debris across the Falklands. To date a total of 160 sites have been surveyed, including many of the outer islands. During the summer of 2015, a trip to West Falklands will complete the survey data. In addition, selected beaches will be monitored regularly throughout the year to understand more about rates of marine debris being washed up.

Marketing

By utilising the funding from the RSPB, the project raise our public profile in the Islands and to target the seasonal tourism market to increasing unrestricted income, was completed earlier in the year. Outcomes included an increase in members, volunteers, Watch Group



10th year for tussac planting. Volunteers at Elephant Beach Farm in June 2015

members, and followers on Facebook and Twitter. Further links have also been made with the corporate sector, with an increase in corporate sponsors and members, along with FC-branded merchandise being more widely distributed and outsourced around the Islands.

Watch Group

Our efforts to build appreciation and understanding of wildlife and conservation continued through the work of our Watch Group. 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 Rocky's News newsletter.

Plans for the future, as previously mentioned, are to incorporate an education centre for the Watch Group into our new building proposal at the Historic Dockyard site.

Will from the RSPB teaching local volunteer Toby how to ring young black-browed albatrosses on Steeple Jason in March 2015



Future Plans for 2015–16

Under the direction of the new CEO, Dr Esther Bertram who arrived in January, we have undertaken a re-prioritisation of organisational and conservation activities mid-way through FCs existing strategy timeframe (2010-19). This is in light of our commitment to strengthen FC's role as a local membership organisation that works on behalf of our members and in partnership with the local and international community to conserve the Falklands natural environment through community outreach, practical conservation research and delivery. FC has been able to make this shift, through the positive development of the Southern Atlantic Scientific Research Institute (SAERI) now leading on international scientific research, as well as working to reduce our dependence on scientific project funding and instead increase our unrestricted funding base for practical conservation activity.

FCs strategic plan will be achieved through the following four pillars of work:

- Improving FC Effectiveness.
- Delivering effective conservation of habitats and species: (Conservation action)

- Influencing decisions within society for the benefit of the natural environment: (Promoting conservation ambition)
- Gaining understanding and representation to and of the Falklands community in FC's programmes: (Community outreach)

FCs conservation priority areas:

FCs conservation re-prioritisation has focussed on the key threats to the natural environment and ranked these according to highest impact and urgency – taking into account which were areas FC could feasibly have an impact on. This prioritisation will lead our conservation direction for the next five years. Our Conservation Manager, Andy Stanworth, will be managing our conservation activities and our Conservation Officer, Sarah Crofts, will be delivering our field-based work, with Frin Ross and Dafydd Crabtree focusing on habitat restoration and lower plant project work.

The following conservation priority areas have been identified to achieve our strategy:

- Strengthening biosecurity and invasives policies procedures and management
- Ensuring best practice for onshore and offshore developments
- Terrestrial habitat restoration
- Enhancing marine management

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

- Under the 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 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 Falklands species.

Ensuring improved FC effectiveness

- Under the direction of our new UK Director, David Spivack, we will be focusing our fundraising efforts on core unrestricted funding for the organisation.
- With the oversight of our Operations Manager, Farrah Peck, we will ensure the day to day running of the office and its facilities, the organisational financial management and HR processes.
- 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, approved to be built at the Historic Dockyard. Likewise restorative work on our listed buildings at Jubilee Villas will start by the end of the year.

All in all it will be another busy year!

Thanks and Acknowledgements

We could not have achieved so much without you!

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, UK Government's Overseas Territories Environment Programme, the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, including their Darwin Initiative and Darwin Plus programmes, the RSPB, The Royal Botanic Gardens – Kew, Wildlife Conservation Society, Birdlife International, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Boise State University, Shackleton Scholarship Fund, Detroit Zoological Society, The H.B. Allen Charitable Trust, Redfern Natural History Productions, British Antarctic Survey, Oxford University, National Museum Wales,

Australian Antarctic Division, Stanley Nurseries, Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, A.S. Butler Charitable Trust, Polar Cruises, Sea Life London Aquarium, Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens, Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens, Drusillas Park, Beaver Island LandCare, the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute, Austral Biodiversity Consultancy and Standard Chartered Bank.

For the Charity Ball held in September 2014 we would like to thank our major sponsor, Consolidated Fisheries Ltd, and additional sponsors; Noble Energy, SAAS, Morrisons Falklands Ltd, Premier Oil, Trant Construction, Van Wijngaarden, British International Helicopters, Polar Quest and Consultancy Services. One Ocean

Expeditions, Holland America, Seaview Logistics, the UK Hydrographic Office, Briggs Environmental Services, Government House, Sea Lion Lodge, Bleaker Island, FIGAS, SMSG, The Obsidian, Golden Fleece Expeditions and local tourism providers and artists for contributions to auction prizes; and the Seafish Chandlery, Falkland Islands Company, Bitter Sweet, The Waterfront, Malvina House Hotel, Sulivan Shipping and many other individuals for their donations to this successful event.

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, including our many penguin adopters.