

NEWSLETTER

January 2020



@FalklandsConservation



@FI_Conversation

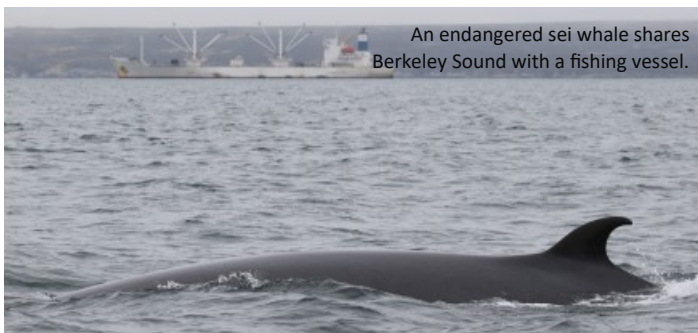


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What lies ahead in 2020 for Falklands Conservation?

Happy New Year to all of our members – and what a busy year we are expecting it to be once again, as we all work together to leave a positive legacy for our natural environment.

We are so fortunate to have such unique wildlife and nature in the Falklands, and we are also very directly dependent on nature for all our livelihoods and industries. To ensure nature's ability to survive, requires very careful planning and regulation. 2020 will therefore see us ramping up our work to inform government decisions on proposed new industry such as oil extraction and salmon farming. To go alongside this, we are also providing training and opportunities for the older members of our Watch Group to understand more about these developing industries. In order to back up our approach to evidence-based conservation, our third successive year studying endangered sei whales will provide more answers to how these incredible whales interact with increasing vessel movements associated with these industries, focusing on the proposed Key Biodiversity Areas that can help protect these fabulous creatures when they visit here each year.



An endangered sei whale shares Berkeley Sound with a fishing vessel.

Also planned for this year, and for which we are currently fundraising, is the island wide census which provides a one point in time look at how **all** of the gentoo and southern rockhopper penguins right across the islands are faring.



Southern Rockhoppers are a species vulnerable to extinction - we need to make sure they have a healthy home in the Falklands and our waters!

This is a huge undertaking and so only occurs every 10 years, but the long-term data is incredibly valuable to conservation efforts. We are also connecting the local community to nature and research by adding to our Citizen Science initiatives; we are starting a number of new projects such as working with the Natural History Museum in London and the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute to help the public to find and share their Falklands Seaweed discoveries and help increase understanding and management of these little-studied organisms. We also have plans for work on a range of key topics including reducing plastics with the Watch Group, as well as better understanding carbon storage in tussac—as we all look to leave a better carbon footprint on our planet. The Watch Group will also be meeting with MLAs to share ideas about their own *Watch Group islands plan*. Many members of the local community have been doing amazing things on their land, and we look forward to working with even more landowners as they personally invest in nature, creating nature areas on their land for the benefit of us all.

Amidst all this, our new organisational building which will enable our busy Watch Group members to be able to have year round inside and outside activities – is now at the planning permission stage. All being well we hope to start building at the end of the year.

As a team we are committed to our work and your support for the upcoming year is vital and truly appreciated. Thank you all.

Island Custodians

Falklands Conservation own and manage a number of nature areas across the Falkland Islands; from sites like the Lyn Blake Nature Reserve that everybody can enjoy, to remote islands with very limited access.

In December 2019 a small team from Falklands Conservation, supported by Detroit Zoological Society, embarked on a mission to survey six of these rarely-visited locations, all within the New Island archipelago. The aims of the trip were to collect population counts for wildlife, to assess the habitats and plant life present, and to monitor and manage any invasive species that were present.

Days were spent climbing through tussac forests, jumping in and out of boats, dodging sea lions, and surveying every prion burrow that could be found. A full survey report will be published later in the year, but there were many highlights to share.

Coffin Island:

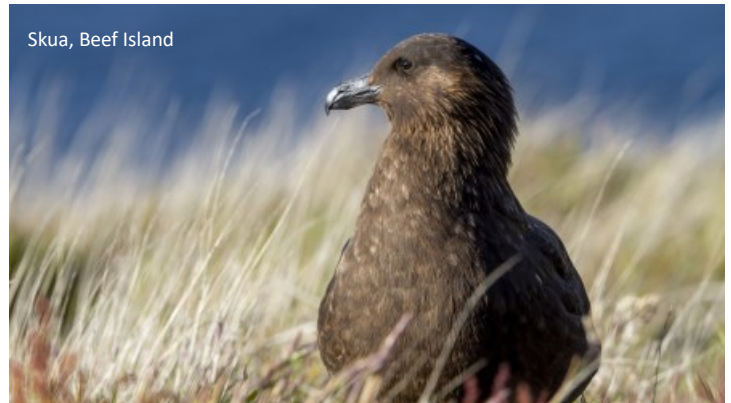
Coffin provided a great opportunity for the survey team to get their hands dirty with some on-the-ground conservation action: planting bluegrass in a patch of previously identified bare soil. It was a little later in the season than we would usually want to plant this native grass, but with the ground still damp from the 'summer' rain, it was well worth a try. Follow up surveys will find out the success of this work. Cobb's wren were also plentiful here, and there was a beautiful population of native violets.



Beef Island:

Beef has been grazed by livestock in the past but thankfully the island still has a good coverage of thick tussac grass at its south end. To the north native species look to be slowly recovering and the opportunity was

taken to remove isolated patches of non-native grasses to prevent their spread. Once again the team found the curious and endemic Cobb's wren, the inquisitive Johnny Rook, skuas were present, and there was a good colony of king and rock cormorants.



Cliff Knob:

This island is just 0.25km at its longest point, but boasts a wild coverage of lovely tussac. Here, the team saw the tiny and endemic Cobb's wren—a brilliant indication that this island is free of rats and mice (the wren can't survive in places with these predators). Prions could be heard in their nests underground, and the base of the steep cliffs were surrounded by a beautiful kelp bed.



North Island:

Arguably the jewel in FC's Island-crown, North Island is almost untouched by humans and is an exciting and enchanting place. The survey team explored huge swathes of bluegrass and tussac, and recorded globally endangered endemic plants such as Falkland rock-cress.

Beef Island





Albatross colony at North Island

20 thousand black-browed albatross breed on North Island, alongside rockhopper penguins and imperial cormorants. It was an incredible glimpse into the remote and wild lives of some of the Falkland Islands most iconic species.

Saddle Island:

Only a short time was spent on this island, however it was a memorable occasion for the survey team. On a calm summer's day the silence was only broken by the roars from the >135 southern sea lions that crowded the sandy beaches, and the thick tussac was impenetrable to the survey team.



Ship Island:

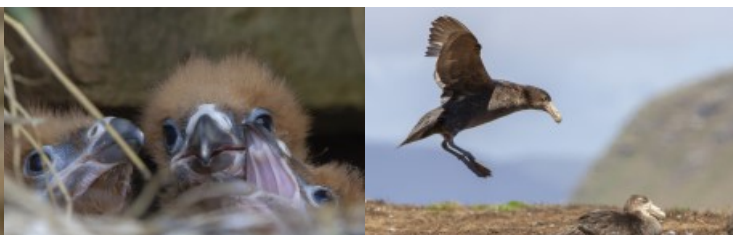
Whilst appearing fairly barren at first glance, Ship was in fact delightfully full of wildlife. Having been grazed and burnt in the past, there is very little coverage of native grasses and plants, however almost every stretch of

shoreline had oystercatcher nests, and the two separate Johnny Rook nests were crammed with 3 chicks each. The island is home to a significant Southern giant petrel colony and a few slender-billed prions.



Albatross at North Island

FC has been fortunate to have been gifted these islands over a long period of time. For those making the gift, they know that as an organisation our aim is to provide positive management to support the nature dependent on these island gems in perpetuity. FC's CEO Esther Bertram, who was part of this survey, commented that "It is really humbling and slightly daunting(!) to know that we are responsible for ensuring a safe future for all these magnificent inhabitants".



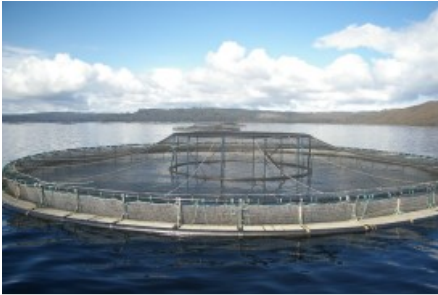
Photos clockwise from top left: Curious sea lions on Saddle Is., caracara chicks and a Southern giant petrel on Ship Is., native violets on Coffin Is., and FC's Esther Bertram and DZS's Lindsay Ireland planting native boxwood on Ship Island.



Salmon Farming - your questions

As Falkland Islands Government enter into the next stage of their process to consider the development of industrial-scale salmon farming in the Falkland Islands, FC have arranged a visit to the Falkland Islands for two aquaculture experts from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Chile during the first week of March, 2020.

Dr. Cristina Torres and Ms. Maria Gálvez have years of experience working with industrial salmon farming and continue to be closely involved with the industry in Chile through overseeing the Aquaculture Stewardship Council certification programme. Having witnessed the growth of industrial salmon farming in Chile, Dr. Torres and Ms. Gálvez are able to speak from a unique and knowledgeable perspective on the economic, social, infrastructural and environmental implications of industrial salmon farming.



Salon farming pens, (Owen Allan, CC2.0)

This is an opportunity for the community to engage with experts in the field that do not directly represent industry and that will present a balanced and relevant perspective on this issue in order to facilitate more informed discourse over the topic of industrial salmon farming. In anticipation of WWF Chile's visit to the Falklands, FC encourage everyone to submit questions about industrial salmon farming for Dr. Torres and Ms. Gálvez to answer over the course of their visit.

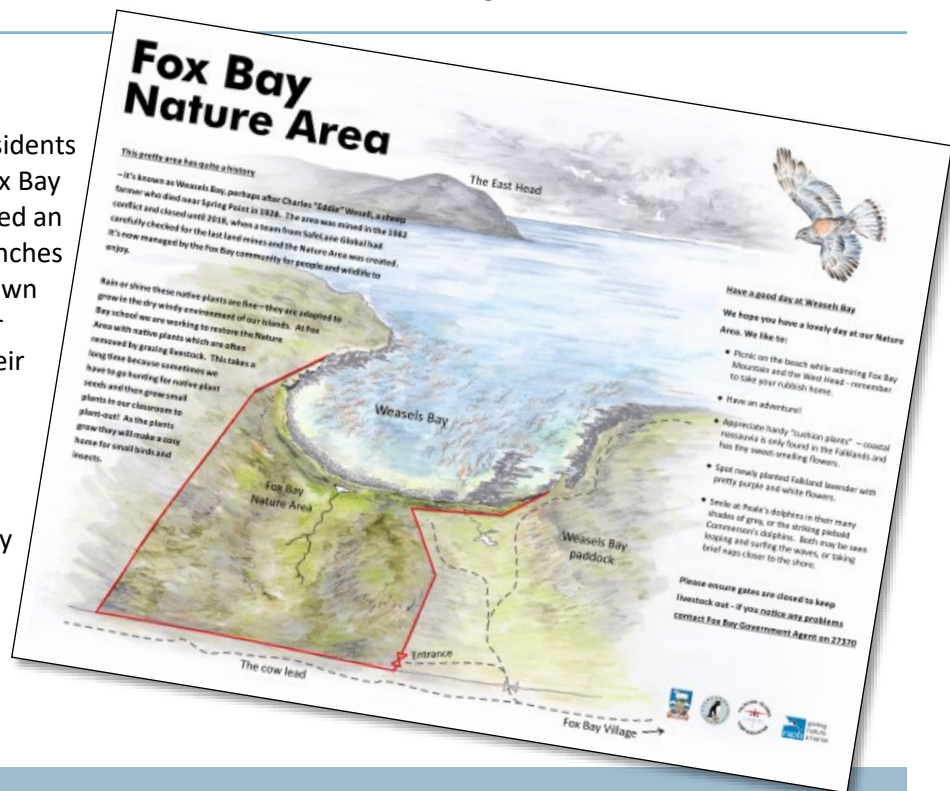
Two public sessions will be arranged and advertised locally, and for more information or to submit questions, contact Marine Conservation Officer Peter Wessels on MCO@conservation.org.fk or call +500 22247

Good Signs Ahead

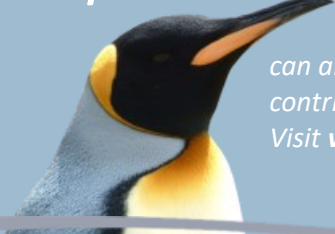
FC have been delighted to work with the residents of Fox Bay to help them create their new Fox Bay Nature Area. The project has recently reached an exciting milestone; as well as fences and benches being installed, and native species being grown by the children at Fox Bay School, the visitor signs have also been finalised and are on their way to the site.

The artwork was completed by Fox Bay resident Ben Cockwell, and it is hoped that the site will be a wonderful location for visitors and residents alike to relax and enjoy the nature and wildlife of this wonderful area.

This is a community project supported by FC, Falkland Islands Government, and the RSPB.



Adopt A Penguin



In addition to being a member of Falklands Conservation, you can also adopt a king penguin at Volunteer Point, and make a valuable contribution to our practical conservation activities.

Visit www.falklandsconservation.com/adoptions to find out more

Dr Esther Bertram, Chief Executive Officer; Dr Andy Stanworth, Conservation Manager

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