

Falklands Conservation Annual Review 2015–16

Our 2015-16 work programme, underpinned by our 2015-19 Conservation Strategy, encompasses four key pillars of work; improving FC effectiveness, community outreach; promoting conservation ambition and conservation action. The work we do reflects our mission to work in partnership with the local and international Falkland Islands community. Falklands Conservation is a full Partner of BirdLife International and endeavours to promote BirdLife policies and positions where they are appropriate to the Islands.

Board of Trustees as at 30 June 2016

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, Sally Blake, Tim Carr, Jan Cheek, Colin Clubbe, John Croxall, Ross James, Edward Maltby, Steve Massam, Ian Moncrieff, Louise Taylor.

Vice Presidents

Sir David Attenborough, Julian Fitter, Robert Gibbons, Peter Harrison, Rebecca Ingham, Robin Woods.

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. Upon a revised structure of roles Dr Andrew Stanworth became the Conservation Manager, and Sarah Crofts became Conservation Officer as of July 2015. David Spivack continued in his role as UK Director, and Elizabeth Milston as the Community Engagement Manager. Victoria Collier was the Administrative Assistant until September 2015 when she handed over to Angela Clarke. Nadia Smith temporarily joined the team as Charity Ball Organiser for the period April–October 2015.

We also had the following project staff:

Micky Reeves – Raptor Project Officer until July 2015; Stuart Smith – Habitat Restoration Officer until handing over to Katherine Ross in October 2015; and Dafydd Crabtree – Lower Plants Project Officer until project completion in May 2016. Throughout the year Helen Marsh very kindly provided voluntary support as the Herbarium Curator, and Susan Thacker joined the UK office as voluntary administrative support in February 2016.

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:

Offices

Plans to expand our office space and to build a nature centre for the Watch Group at the Historic Dockyard development in the centre of Stanley continued. The fundraising appeal for this initiative was launched at St James's Palace by our Patron HRH The Duke of York, and at Government House Stanley, in June 2016.

Policy and 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, and the Seabird Bycatch Committee. We attended FIG's Environment Committee as formal members. Outside of the Islands, the Conservation Manager attended the annual plenary of the Forum for the

Conservation of the Patagonian Sea, the CEO attended the UK Overseas Territories meeting in Gibraltar and the Joint Ministerial Council Reception in London, and the UK Director ensured we had a high profile at the 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 available for landowners to utilise for agri-environmental benefits. We had a display at the Farmers' Week Expo, had Herbarium and Habitat Restoration Trial Plot open days, and hosted an evening meal. We arranged volunteer weekends for planting 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 our main fundraising event on the islands. Members received two issues of our magazine, *Wildlife Conservation* in the Falkland Islands, as well as two copies of our newsletter.

The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme

This programme, supported by FIG's Environmental Studies Budget (ESB), continued into its 27th year. This is a survey of southern rockhopper, gentoo and king penguin colonies, together with black-browed albatross and southern giant petrel. This year saw further increases in most breeding populations; however, the later part of the season saw regionally poor breeding success and in some cases adult mortalities through disease and starvation. Southern rockhopper and gentoo penguins were most affected. 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 RedList assessments.

The Black-browed Albatross Demographic Study

This study, again supported by the ESB, continued for a tenth 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, saw trackers attached to adult white-chinned petrels in the Falklands and at South Georgia. The Falklands work aims to provide more information on the movements of the white-chinned petrel population and establish links with other populations through DNA analysis. Trackers were retrieved this season with analysis showing movement of Falklands' birds as far as southern Peru and southern Brazil.

Southern Giant Petrel Census

This project supported by both the MoD and JNCC involved aerial photography of key breeding sites for southern giant petrel around the Islands. The last census for this ACAP species was undertaken in 2004/5 and this data aims to provide an update on the population estimate. Data still to be analysed.

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 second year of this now complete Darwin Plus funded project, a satellite laboratory for bryophyte and lichen study was set up in Fox Bay School. Three teams of specialists visited for a total of nine weeks of survey. Over 90 species of lichen were newly recorded for the Islands, including 16 to 18 species new to science. 20 species of moss and eight liverwort species were also newly recorded for the Falklands bringing the total number for the three groups to 753 species. The Project Officer was able to visit South Georgia to view comparable species, impart knowledge and supplement herbarium collections. A field guide entitled 'Lichens of the Falkland Islands' was produced for the most common lichen species found in the Falklands.

Building Capacity for Habitat Restoration in the Falkland Islands

This Darwin Initiative funded project has been completed. 16 restoration trial sites were set up across East Falkland, 37 native seed collections were made and a Native Seed Hub was run in Stanley. Volunteer help and assistance from landowners was a vital component of this project. Trial results are promising with native plants growing on severely eroded clay, peat and sand sites. The project was of interest to farm managers and the conservation sector, it has been well publicised with field trips for focus groups and school children and features on social media, print media and on FITV and FIRS. Key events this year were a display at Farmers Week and training workshops on East and West Falkland.

Developing Hydrocarbon Policy Frameworks

With funding and support from the RSPB, we worked 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.

Rural Environmental Engagement

Funded by the Rural Development Strategy, FIDC, we began to work 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 showcase local projects and expertise. In response we have begun to trial a 'case-study' approach whereby our staff document local techniques that have both agricultural and conservation benefits.

Falkland Islands National Herbarium

An active year for the herbarium saw the addition of nearly 100 bryophyte and 40 lichen specimens from the Darwin Lower Plants project. The herbarium now has a logo and is registered with Index Herbarium, a global directory of public herbaria and associated staff. It hosted a successful open day at Farmers Week well attended by members of the Falkland Islands community.



Collecting tussac seed on Narrows Island, Port Howard Farm

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

This new one-year EU BEST funded project was recently secured. The project will take a site-based approach to further understanding sei whale abundance and distribution in Berkeley Sound. The aim is to look at potential interactions with human activities, both whale-watching tourism and industry operations, and to guide policy development on avoiding impacts on this species as potential use of the Sound increases.

Oiled Seabird Rehabilitation Facility

A low number of oiled gentoo and king penguins were cared for and released during the year. A small number of underweight rockhoppers were admitted to the facility during April to June 2016, coinciding with larger numbers of rockhopper penguins reported by some landowners as starving during the moult period. Volunteers were trained in caring for penguins, and the facility hosted 'feeding sessions' for the public and visits arranged for local school and youth groups. The facility also provides capacity for the offshore oil industry's Oil Spill Response Plans.

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. Plans to incorporate a nature centre for the Watch Group into our new building at the Historic Dockyard continue.

Gentoo counting between snow squalls at Lagoon Sands

Thanks & Acknowledgements

We could not have achieved so much without you!

Major supporters of our project work (in terms of funding, help or advice – sometimes all three) in the past year were: the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) and Environmental Studies Budget (ESB), UK Government's Overseas Territories Environment Programme, the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, including their Darwin Plus programmes, the RSPB, Shackleton Scholarship Fund, Standard Chartered Bank, the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, 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 Detroit Zoological Society, The H.B. Allen Charitable Trust, A.S. Butler Charitable Trust, Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens, Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens, Drusillas Park, and the SeaLife London Aquarium.

For the Charity Ball held in Sept 2015 we would like to thank our major sponsor, Consolidated Fisheries Ltd, and additional sponsors; Noble Energy, Premier Oil, British International Helicopters, Briggs Marine, the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, 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, Falkland Islands Company, The Falkland Islands Museum and National Trust, The Waterfront Kitchen Cafe, The Malvina House Hotel, Seaview Logistics, Lindblad Expeditions, Colas, and many other individuals for their donations to this successful event.

For the launch of our Building for the Future fundraising campaign at St James's Palace in June 2016 we would like to thank joint sponsors of the event Stanley Services Ltd., the Falkland Islands Government, and Falkland Islands Holdings, and also Waitrose for their donation towards the evening. For substantial donations to the Building for the Future fundraising campaign we would like to thank Standard Chartered Bank, Falkland Islands Government, Premier Oil, Noble Energy, JK Marine, Caribbean Alliance, John and Tracey Hellowell, Henry Kenner and Morrison's Construction.

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.



Plans for the Future 2016–17

We will continue to focus efforts on our priority conservation activities. This is in line with the existing Strategic Plan for 2010-19, but uses a threats based approach to focus our conservation efforts for the remainder of the plan. 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 new Habitats Officer, Frin Ross will be focusing on habitat restoration.

This work will be achieved through the following work streams: Conservation Action, Promoting Conservation Ambition, Community Outreach and Engagement, and Improving FC Effectiveness.

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.
- Building engagement and understanding of our members and the local community on key issues affecting the natural environment.

OUR CONSERVATION PRIORITIES ARE LISTED BELOW:

Strengthening biosecurity and invasives policies procedures and management

PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION:

- Working closely with government in strengthening biosecurity legislation and encouraging an integrated approach to invasive management.

CONSERVATION ACTION:

- Continue to carry out practical invasive work through thistle eradication visits to Saunders Island.

Ensuring best practice for onshore and offshore developments

PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION:

- Continue to 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:

- Continue to respond to oiled seabird emergencies.

Terrestrial habitat restoration

PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION:

- Work with FIG and landowners to explore land improvement incentive mechanisms that focus on biodiversity.

CONSERVATION ACTION:

- Continuing our restoration work on Sea Lion Island, Elephant Beach Farm, Cape Pembroke and FC-owned islands.
- Working with landowners to build capacity for habitat restoration and the understanding of lower plant species at key sites.

Enhancing marine management

PROMOTING CONSERVATION AMBITION:

- Continue providing technical advice to the Marine Spatial Planning project led by the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI).

CONSERVATION ACTION:

- Better understand endangered Sei whales and ship movements in Berkeley Sound we will be focusing research, outreach and advocacy on this area.
- Monitor key indicators of marine management we will continue our Annual Seabird Monitoring Program.

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

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

Ensuring improved FC effectiveness

- Our UK Director, David Spivack, will lead our fundraising plans we will continue focusing our efforts on unrestricted funding.
- The oversight of our Office Manager, Farrah Peck, 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 building



TOP TO BOTTOM:

An assembly of mosses and lichens, just a few of those surveyed; tussac planting at Sea Lion island; a local nursery group visit the oiled seabird rehabilitation facility; southern rockhopper penguin chick crèche count for FISMP; WATCH group at Sea Lion Island

Once again it will be a busy year all round!

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