

Falklands Conservation Annual Review

July 2017–June 2018

Falklands Conservation is a full Partner of BirdLife International, making a significant contribution to the BirdLife Global Marine Programme, and works closely with the UK Partner, the RSPB. We also have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) whereby we undertake agreed environmental activities on behalf of the Islands' wildlife and people.

Partnering with the local and international community to conserve the Falkland Islands' natural environment.

Patron: HRH The Duke of York

Vice Presidents: Sir David Attenborough; Peter Harrison; Julian Fitter; Rebecca Ingham; Robert Gibbons; Mark Carwardine; Robin Woods.

Board of Trustees: Roger Spink (FC Chairman); Henry Robinson (UK Chair); Mandy Shepherd (UK Vice Chair); Dr Paul Brewin (FI Vice Chair); Tym Marsh (Hon Treasurer); Keith Biles (FI Hon Treasurer); Thomas Blake; Ross James; Sally Blake; Tim Carr; Jan Cheek; Dr Colin Clubbe; Prof John Croxall; Sally-Ann Wilson; Steve Massam; Ian Moncrieff; Louise Taylor; Duane Evans; Matthew Bassford.

Staff: Happily, most staff remained with us throughout the whole of this

year; Dr Esther Bertram (Chief Executive Officer), Farrah Peck (Office Manager in the Falklands), Dr Andrew Stanworth (Conservation Manager), Sarah Crofts (Conservation Officer), Dr Katherine Ross (Habitats Officer), David Spivack (UK Director), and Elizabeth Milston (Community Engagement Manager). The one staff change between July 2017 and June 2018 was Michelle Winnard replacing Pamela Jelbes as Administrative Officer in March 2018.

We have also had the following project staff during the year: Dr Caroline Weir continued to work with us as the Sei Whale Project Officer, Helen Marsh provided voluntary support to our charity as Herbarium Curator, and Susan

Thacker continued to provide voluntary administrative support to the UK office.

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

Premises: Our main conservation operations are managed from our head office at Jubilee Villas in Stanley, with our UK Director based at The Gatehouse in Sandy, Bedfordshire, UK. We are working towards our vision of a purpose-built headquarters in Stanley with a dedicated space for Watch Group activities, and our application for outlining planning at the site known as 'West of 10 Acres' was approved.

THE YEAR'S ACHIEVEMENTS

An overview of some of the achievements from 2017–18:

People

We continued our investment in our staff, without whom none of our work would be possible, through individual and organisational focussed training opportunities. The Board approved expansion in our capacity for communications and outreach focus, resulting in the formation of two new roles, Communications & Marketing Officer and Community Outreach Officer, from the previously singular role of Community Engagement Manager.

Fundraising

We continued to update our fundraising plan to ensure we have sustainable income streams in place, and undertook associated communications planning. We hosted 150 guests at our annual Charity Ball, our main fundraising event on the Islands. We continued to maintain relationships with wildlife parks in the UK who kindly promote our charity and display collection boxes for Falklands wildlife.

For the Charity Ball held in Sept 2017, we would like to thank our major sponsor, Consolidated Fisheries Ltd, and additional sponsors; the Falkland

Islands Development Corporation, South American Atlantic Services, Interserve Defence Ltd, RBC Limited, Lindblad Expeditions and One Ocean Expeditions. Thanks also go to local tourism providers, artists and donors for contributions to auction prizes and the raffle, and the Seafish Chandlery, The Malвина House Hotel, and many other individuals and volunteers for their support.

Supplementing of our fundraising efforts and marketing of our image in the Falkland Islands continued through our small gift shop at Jubilee Villas, and through selling our products to local Falklands retailers. Our efforts to project our image internationally also continued, with outsourcing of our products through southern ocean cruise ship companies, UK museum giftshops, at Detroit Zoo in the USA, and via our webshop.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Our Small Grants Scheme supported local conservation efforts of a native plants garden at Goose Green School, and to fence eroded land at Port Edgar farm ready for native habitat restoration.

We had a display at the Falkland Islands Farmers' Week Expo, held a talk to inform people of our sei whale work, took landowners out on research activities and hosted an evening meal. We arranged volunteer weekends for the planting of native tussock grass on eroded ground, and facilitated local interest to join the sei whale survey on West Falkland. Numerous public talks, community events, print, TV, and radio appearances were held throughout the year. Our members received two issues of our 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 continued 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, which had a record number of 60 members this year. With the generous support of the Standard Chartered Bank, we were able to maintain a programme of activities throughout the

year. Their activities were recorded in the quarterly Rocky's News newsletter. 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 commented on several elements of the oil companies' operations 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, we remained members of the Forum for the Conservation of the Patagonian Sea, the UK Director attended the Joint Ministerial Council Reception in London, and we had a high profile at the UK's 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.

Ensuring leading practice for on-shore and offshore development

Developing Hydrocarbon Policy Frameworks

With funding from the RSPB, we have continued to work with industry and government to ensure leading practice for hydrocarbon developments in the Falkland Islands.

Oiled Seabird Rehabilitation

We successfully cared for and released a low number of king penguins over the year. Local volunteers were trained in how to take care of the penguins, and popular 'open day' visits for families were hosted. This year's focus on raising funds for a new roof for the facility was successful with significant help from the BirdLife Penguin Campaign, RSPB, and FIG's Environmental Studies Budget (ESB). Five new information panels, designed and funded by the Detroit Zoological Society, arrived and are ready to be fitted once

building works to the facility have been completed this coming summer.

Driving forward habitat restoration and land management

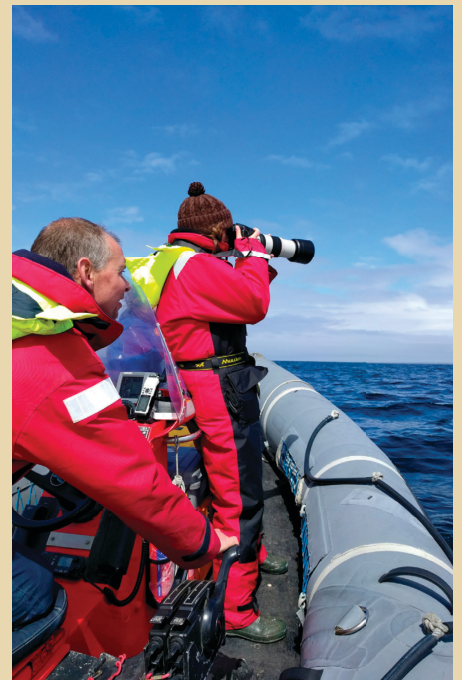
This year saw an increase in the amount of native tussac planting to enhance local habitats, including; a new volunteer trip to Beaker Island, large efforts at Sea Lion Island, and new farm-led planting efforts through the Small Grants Scheme, as well as our usual annual support to long-term initiatives at Elephant Beach and Cape Dolphin farms. Additional funding was leveraged from the RSPB to support restoration through private nature areas. We also met with SpringCreek Conservation whose interest in supporting Falklands restoration was piqued by work across the Islands, including the Native Seed Hub and the tussac plantations at Cape Dolphin Farm. Thanks must go to all farms across the Falklands, for making this collaborative work possible.

This year, our four main project areas for habitat restoration and management were: the second year of a three year project on habitat restoration and outreach, supported by the John Ellerman Foundation and focusing on youth education and native-plant restoration; practical management of Sea Lion Island Nature Reserve, including habitat restoration (over 15 hectares replanted with tussac since 2014) and rodent monitoring; producing site-specific management plans for FIG owned protected areas in line with the Falkland Islands Biodiversity Framework, including the development of the 'Neil Clark Nature Area' at Port Howard Farm, West Falkland; and continued monitoring of Falklands Conservation Nature Reserves with the support of Detroit Zoological Society, these sites include globally important areas for biodiversity - new breeding colonies for seabirds were discovered and increasing populations of globally threatened endemic plants were recorded.

Enhanced marine management

The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme

The Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme, supported by FIG's ESB, continued into its 29th year. This is a survey of southern rockhopper, gentoo and king penguin colonies, together with black-browed albatross, southern giant petrel and with the recent addition of imperial shag and Falkland skua. This year saw partial recoveries of breeding pair numbers for the gentoo penguin and black-browed albatross from 2016 counts. Breeding pair numbers for southern rockhopper penguin remained



TOP TO BOTTOM: Steve and Caroline on sei whale fieldwork; Ben and the Watch Group at Elephant Beach Farm; Sylvia and Ruby plant tussac at Sea Lion Island

relatively unchanged from 2016 counts, although still represented a loss of 31% of pairs from the 2015 counts. The overall breeding success was of notable concern for gentoo penguin, southern rockhopper penguin and southern giant petrel. The counts were undertaken by a team of two staff, ten volunteers and four local landowners, as well as a compliment of UK RSPB volunteers who counted seabirds from photographic images.

Black-browed Albatross Census

With funding from FIG's ESB, a breeding population survey of black-browed albatrosses at the 12 breeding sites in the Falkland Islands was undertaken in October. The survey was completed in under 6 hours by using a FIGAS Islander aeroplane to take high resolution photographs. Over 3,000 images were filtered and processed resulting in around 500 images to be counted. A team of staff and volunteers aim to provide a final population estimate by late 2018. The last island-wide census was conducted in 2010, and as the Falkland Islands hold approximately 70% of the world's breeding population of black-browed albatrosses, assessing the population status will identify the current global population trend.

Sei Whale Projects

Five distinct, but integrated, sei whale research projects were conducted this year, firstly by seeing the completion

of the development of a site-based conservation approach for sei whales at Berkley Sound, Falkland Islands. This first pilot project was funded by an EU BEST 2.0 grant and used air, land, and sea surveys to assess sei whale abundance and distribution in this candidate Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), to create an identification database of Falkland's sei whales, and to inform on government-level decisions and marine management plans.

Following on from this, and with funding support from the RSPB, studies were expanded to include candidate KBAs in West Falkland. Six weeks of summer fieldwork was carried out and many aspects of sei whale behaviour, abundance, and genetics were investigated as part of a number of ongoing projects. Spatial data informed the assessment of the cKBAs, our whale photo-identification catalogue was expanded, and drones were trialled as a research method. Information on sex ratios, genetic distribution, and feeding ecology should all be possible through a genetic sampling project which collected samples from live whales, under FIG licence, and from stranded animals and historic bones. This special analysis will be conducted by British Antarctic Survey (BAS) in the United Kingdom. With funding from FIG's ESB, sei whale behavioural work was carried out alongside the West Falkland survey, to increase understanding of their

natural surfacing behaviour in order to produce guidelines to better assess vessel strike modelling, and to assess potential disturbance of human activities. Combining studies (Berkeley Sound and West Falkland) of Falkland sei whale cue rates and surfacing behaviour has provided systematic information useful in informing abundance estimates and better understanding differences in behaviour between habitats around the Islands.

Finally, with funding from Darwin Plus, a new project was initiated in April furthering our work on candidate KBAs for whales. This project, 'Conserving Falklands' whale populations: addressing data deficiencies for informed management', partners with several global experts to advance understanding of the little understood sei whale and other baleen species within Falkland Sound and Berkeley Sound candidate KBAs. In addition to expanding our knowledge on the use of these sites, including over multiple seasons, the work uses developing technology to pilot underwater acoustic monitoring and suction cup tagging to explore long-term monitoring approaches and expand our insight into behaviour under the waves. The project's overall aims are to improve the information available to decision-makers, and engage stakeholders regarding conservation and management considerations for these and other KBAs.

Plans for the Future

Going forwards into 2018-19 and beyond, we will continue to work to promote understanding of the environment's pivotal role in underpinning our economy and livelihoods, in order to increase local and international commitment to the natural environment. In partnership with the local community, we will drive forward Falklands Conservation's fundraising, communications, outreach and conservation objectives to the benefit of the natural environment.

Ensuring improved FC effectiveness:

- With our UK Director, David Spivack, leading our fundraising plans we will continue to focus our efforts on increasing unrestricted funding.
- We are able to expand our activities under the direction of our new Communications & Marketing Officer, Liz Milston.
- 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.

- To increase our abilities to work effectively with our Watch Group and the community, we will be continuing our fundraising efforts for our new building.
- We will continue to benefit from strong governance with our board of Trustees.

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

- Under the direction of our new Community Outreach Officer, Michael Ford, we will continue our successful work with the Watch Group and our adult volunteer activities.
- Helen Marsh will continue as the voluntary Herbarium Curator maintaining the National Herbarium.

Delivering conservation action and promoting conservation ambition:

We will continue to focus on our priority conservation activities to lead our conservation efforts through to 2023. 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 continue with 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:

- We will work with government in strengthening biosecurity legislation

and practice and encouraging a coordinated approach to invasive management.

- We will support landowners to carry out practical invasive action on their land, as well as new sites for plant or animal eradication as need is identified.

Ensuring leading practice for onshore and offshore developments:

- 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.
- We will respond to oiled seabird emergencies.

Terrestrial habitat restoration and land management:

- We will work with FIG and landowners to explore land improvement incentive mechanisms that focus on biodiversity and sustainable management and build local recognition and enthusiasm for native species and habitats.
- We will continue our conservation management work with landowners and on FC-owned islands and work with landowners to share learning on habitat restoration.

Enhancing marine management:

- We will work with FIG towards implementation of Marine Spatial

Planning and increase the profile of designated sites in delivering this.

- To better understand endangered sei whales and ship movements, we will be focusing research and management planning on candidate KBAs.
- To monitor key indicators of marine management we will continue our Annual Seabird Monitoring Programme.

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

Thanks & Acknowledgements

Throughout the year we have had the following supporters (in terms of funds, help or advice – often all three):

Birdlife International, the Forum for the Conservation of the Patagonian Sea and Areas of Influence, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and their Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BEST) in European overseas territories programme, the Royal Botanic Gardens KEW and the Millennium Seed Bank, Wildlife Conservation Society, Falkland Islands Government, UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs including their Darwin Plus programmes, the RSPB, the John Ellerman Foundation, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Detroit Zoological Society, British Antarctic Survey, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Oxford

University, the International Network for Seed-based Restoration, IUCN Peatland Program, One Ocean, Quark, Aiuká, the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute, Island LandCare, Elephant Seal Research Group, New Island Conservation Trust, the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, the Rural Business Association, the Department of Agriculture, Shallow Marine Surveys Group, the UK Ministry of Defence, Air Tanker, the NAAFI, Trant Construction, Stanley Nurseries, Cape Dolphin Farm, Standard Chartered Bank, Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens, Drusillas Park, Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens, Steve Spring, Tarmac (a CRH Company) and Stanley Services Ltd.

We would especially like to acknowledge and thank the H.B. Allen Charitable Trust

who have been regular and significant supporters of our core activities for many years. The Trust is sadly being wound up later this year.

Corporate supporters 2017–18: Sea Lion Island (Wild Falklands Ltd), the Pale Maiden B&B, Bleaker Island, International Tours & Travel, JD Robertson, Pebble Island Lodge, Morrison's Falklands Ltd, The Malvina House Hotel, Falkland Island Holidays, Darwin Lodge, Oceanwide Expeditions, and Colonial Equipment.

None of our work would be possible without our members, corporate supporters and penguin adopters, who support our important conservation work with generous donations, 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: Bridge House, 4 Borough High Street, London SE1 9QR, UK.

Tussac – planting now, for the future