

# NEWSLETTER

January 2019



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## SMALL GRANT, BIG GARDEN!

Goose Green school were well-deserved recipients of Falklands Conservation's 2017 Small Grants scheme, and the pupils and teachers spent much of last year putting those funds to use in creating a Native Plant Garden at their school. The original idea came from one of the students and after taking inspiration from the nearby native garden at Mare Harbour, the children enthusiastically and industriously landscaped a plot of land and planted a variety of native species including boxwood, blue grass, tussac, 'curly-whirly' grass, cushion plants, celery, and marsh daisies. Special plants were purchased from Stanley Nurseries and other cuttings and seeds were also donated to the school from Falklands Conservation's own native plant garden: the students took great care, pride, and effort in nurturing the young plants.



The project was enthusiastically led by teacher, Sarah Edwards, seen above collecting her boxwood cuttings from Falklands Conservation.

Native plants are naturally well-suited to the growing conditions in the Islands, and provide a wonderful array of shelter and food for the local wildlife; there are 177 vascular plant species recorded as native to the Islands as well as one hybrid. Fourteen vascular plant species are endemic to the Falklands and two are near endemics. Moore's Plantain is an example of an endemic species, and is globally endangered, meaning that Goose Green School's efforts to plant and grow this small, slightly fluffy, cushion plant are even more worthwhile and important!

After a nervous wait over the winter months, the warmer Spring weather brought with it signs of new growth; the children's exceptional efforts in caring for and planting their seeds and cuttings had started to pay off. This lovely area will be an attractive and educational addition to the school, and will attract an array of insects and birds. As the garden grows, the school hopes to donate cuttings and seeds for other projects in the Islands, as well as welcoming visitors outside of school hours.



Scurvy grass (L) and boxwood (R) are two native species that can now be found in the Goose Green School garden. Boxwood can be grown from cuttings using recycled 'pots' such as these old milk cartons.

In addition to the funds from Falklands Conservation, there were many other individuals from the Goose Green community who kindly donated labour, spare time, and extra cuttings to the school garden. Without them, this project would not have been possible.

Falklands Conservation are always keen to support efforts in the Falkland Islands to restore or establish native plant areas; from fun educational projects such as this, to habitat restoration projects across larger areas. If you have been inspired by the children of Goose Green, then please contact Habitats Officer Frin Ross by email at [habitatsrestore@conservation.org.fk](mailto:habitatsrestore@conservation.org.fk) or call **22247** to find out more.





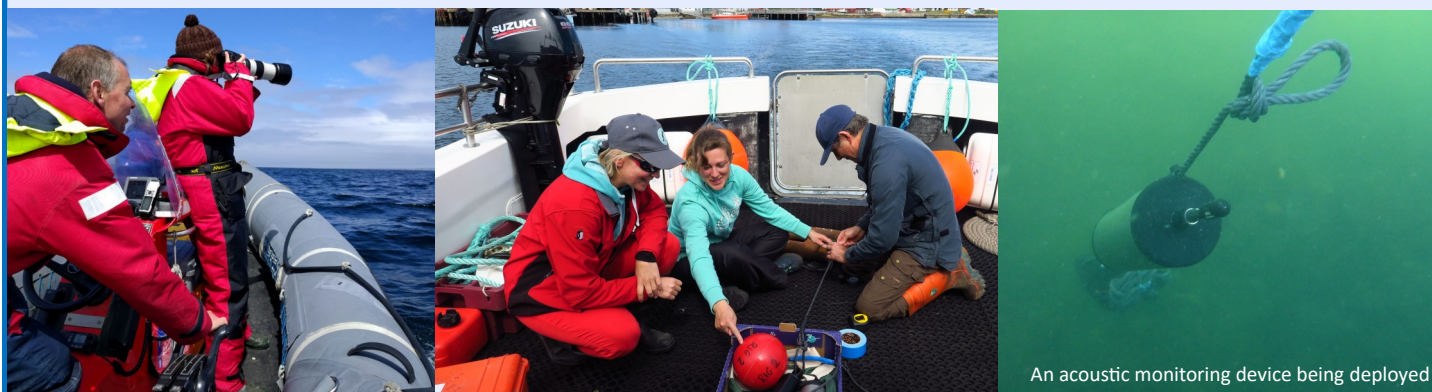
## New Nature Area on West Falkland

The **Neil Clark Nature Area** at Port Howard Farm has begun to take shape. The initiative, led by Port Howard Farm with support from Falklands Conservation, the John Ellerman Foundation, and the RSPB, is a long-term project to showcase Falklands wildlife and landscapes, for all to experience. The area has a small pool and beautiful views in all directions – it's the perfect place to relax and explore. The picturesque coastal area will support a range of plant species which are reduced by grazing elsewhere. Regrowth and re-introduction of species such as bluegrass, Falklands lavender, ladies slipper, boxwood and perhaps even snake plants will create valuable habitats for Falklands wildlife, as well as showcasing beautiful flowering plants for future generations to enjoy. With luck this year's native plantings will grow to support Falkland's wildlife, prevent erosion, and even fight climate change long after we are around.



## What does the whale say?

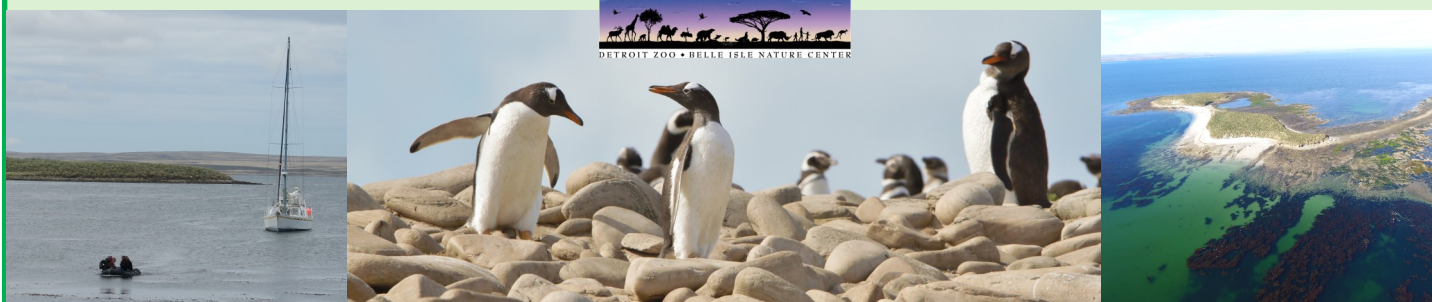
Falklands Conservation are thrilled to be welcoming back Cetaceans Project Officer Caroline Weir. Caroline will be continuing her research on the sei whales of the Falkland Islands, however this time the project is also studying southern right whales and is including acoustic monitoring and suction-cup tagging work. By deploying state-of-the-art acoustic recording devices in Berkeley Sound for periods of up to six months at a time, we hope to understand even more about the long-term use of this candidate Key Biodiversity Area (ckBA) by these enigmatic and endangered whales. This will then allow us to help shape the current and future management of this area. It is an exciting and long-term project, which would not be possible without funding by The Darwin Initiative. The project was previously funded by the RSPB and the Falkland Islands Government. Caroline and the team are looking forward to providing updates as this project progresses - keep an eye out for **#WhaleWednesday** on our social media accounts!

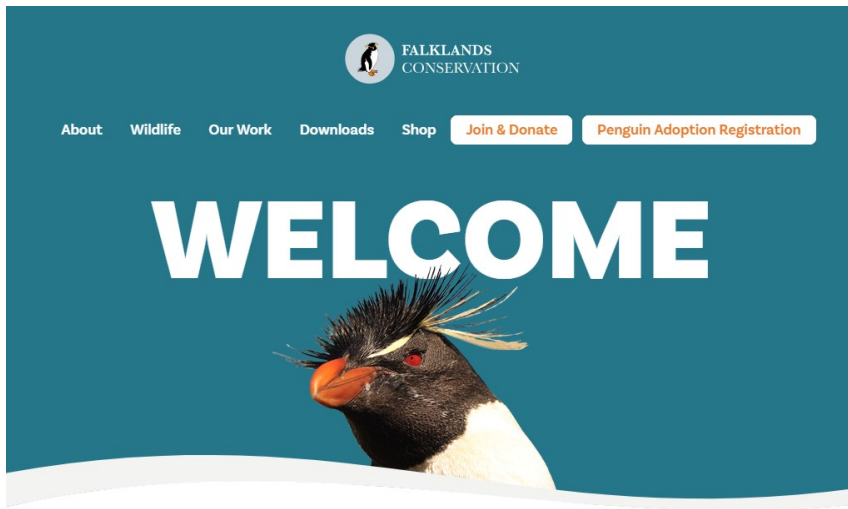


An acoustic monitoring device being deployed

## Detroit Zoo: Exploring the remote corners of the Falklands

December 2018 saw the third visit by partner organisation, Detroit Zoological Society, to the Falklands. Falklands Conservation have a long-term collaboration with DZS to monitor FC-owned islands, and this year the work also included a penguin health check; the team took blood samples from gentoo and rockhopper penguins and will analyse these for diseases, stress hormones, and toxins. The work will create baseline data for future monitoring, as well as providing an overview of the current health status of the populations sampled. The trip also involved wildlife and plant surveys at offshore islands; both on islands owned by FC and also on some private islands. A full report will be available once the data analysis is complete.





## Falklands Conservation have launched a new website!

The new site is full of information about our projects and the wildlife of the Islands, it is also where you will find our online shop.

[www.falklandsconservation.com](http://www.falklandsconservation.com)

We are aware that there will be a few bugs to address over the next few months and so if you have feedback, please email [marketing@conservation.org.fk](mailto:marketing@conservation.org.fk)

## Watch Group; Watch this space...

The young members' group of Falklands Conservation, the Watch Group, has had a busy and productive summer so far, and it looks set to continue with a full schedule lined up for 2019.

Since August the Watch Group has worked with and strengthened the Plastic Free Stanley message; running workshops to learn more about recycling, and taking a key role in the #CleanUp Stanley day which saw wide stretches of the Falkland Islands cleared of marine debris. The Plastic Free Message being delivered by these extraordinary young spokespeople is likely to be endorsed by the Members of the Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly (MLAs) later in 2019 and will help keep the topic in the public arena.

In November, the group had a super time working with local group SAERI (South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute) and learning about drones and their uses for mapping the habitats of the Islands. Through this they have developed their knowledge of some of the wonderful native habitats in the Islands, including being able to identify species and habitat categories. The group learned the value of and experienced first-hand the use of satellites and drones for science/research and made a small contribution to SAERI's Coastal Mapping project. December saw members of the Watch Group present at Falklands Conservation's Annual General Meeting, setting out some of their inspiring plans to grow and develop the organisation even further.

Carrying on into the remaining summer months, the Group will be learning more about the birds and marine mammals that can be found in the Falklands, and will be building on their wonderful enthusiasm and passion for the natural world. With trips planned across the Falklands, there will be no shortage of new experiences to enjoy. The group will also be helping to manage the route of the Standard Chartered 2019 Marathon, playing an important role in directing the athletes and keeping the course clear and tidy. Standard Chartered have been generous sponsors of the Watch Group for many years.

If you are based in the Falkland Islands and have an activity which the Watch Group would enjoy, or you would like to volunteer time or other resources to this group, please contact Community Outreach Officer Mike Ford on 22247, or email [outreach@conservation.org.fk](mailto:outreach@conservation.org.fk)



Plastic Free Stanley workshops proved an insightful success.



Drone workshops with partner organisations demonstrated the benefit of new technology to scientific research and conservation.



Watch Group members showed great maturity in presenting a vision for the future of their organisation.

Supported by





Falklands Conservation were delighted to be able to host a public talk by acclaimed naturalist, TV producer, and author; **Stephen Moss**. Stephen addressed a packed audience to share clips, highlights, and anecdotes from a career of almost three decades with the BBC Natural History Unit, where he was an original producer of *BBC Springwatch*. Stephen was in the Islands thanks to the Falkland Islands Tourist Board, and if any members would like to see highlights of Stephen's talk, please email [marketing@conservation.org.fk](mailto:marketing@conservation.org.fk)



## Research Roundup

*An opportunity to see snippets of recently published papers that were researched in the Falkland Islands...*

A recent report in *Molecular Endocrinology* investigated the genetic dispersal ability of five Southern Ocean penguin species. The study included two species which breed in the Falkland Islands, and found that whilst young king penguins could travel over 5000km from their place of birth, gentoo penguins live a relatively sheltered life; even outside the breeding period they are rarely seen more than 50km offshore.

This cautious lifestyle could well be the reason there seems to be little genetic mixing between major colonies. "Dispersal ability and genetic differentiation should be factored into any action plans for these species", says researcher Dr Gemma Clucas. "Because Gentoo Penguins seem to have such a low rate of dispersal between island archipelagos, each of the archipelagos we looked at harboured unique genetic diversity that would be lost for good if the population were to go extinct. This could be bad news for the species in the long term, because genetic diversity is important for adapting to changing conditions. This means that all of the archipelagos that are home to Gentoo Penguins should be given a high degree of protection."

*Clucas GV, Younger JL, Kao D, et al. Comparative population genomics reveals key barriers to dispersal in Southern Ocean penguins. Mol Ecol. 2018;27:4680–4697.*

The journal *Science of the Total Environment* also published a paper that investigated Falkland Islands penguin species. Marta Cerda-Cellar *et al.* researched the role that humans are inadvertently having in spreading disease amongst Antarctic and Sub-Antarctic wildlife. A number of their findings suggest that human diseases are able to be, and have been, passed onto wildlife; the detection of bacteria typical in human infections; certain antibiotic resistance; and the discovery of very common bacterial genotypes that, until now, have very rarely been detected in wild birds.

The spread from human to wild bird is new and seems to have arisen through scavengers that overlap with humans, importantly skuas, that can move between other seabird colonies and spread human infections to seabirds in remote locations such as Antarctica. The authors conclude that the results "highlight the need for even stricter biosecurity measures to limit human impacts in Antarctica."

*Cerdà-Cuellar M, Moré E, Ayats T, et al. Do humans spread zoonotic enteric bacteria in Antarctica? Science of The Total Environment. 2019;654:190-196,*

**Are you interested in the scientific research being carried out in the Falkland Islands? Email [info@conservation.org.fk](mailto:info@conservation.org.fk) for copies of the above reports, and more.**

## 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](http://www.falklandsconservation.com/adoptions) to find out more*

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