

Newsletter



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Monitoring sei whale behaviour in West Falkland

Between February and April 2018, Falklands Conservation (FC) carried out survey work to assess sei whale occurrence in Queen Charlotte and King George Bays in West Falkland. One component of the work was a behavioural study, which received funding from the Environmental Studies Budget of the Falkland Islands Government. The behaviour of sei whales is very poorly known worldwide, and this work aimed to collect information on their dive durations, surfacing characteristics, "cue rates" (i.e. blows per whale per hour) and travel speeds to provide a comparison with similar data collected in Berkeley Sound during 2017. To accomplish this, the survey team followed sei whale individuals and groups for periods of around an hour, and recorded the time of every surfacing event into a computer or dictaphone. A GPS was used to record the route of the boat as it followed the whales, allowing an assessment of their spatial movements and travel speeds. Accurate dive times could only be measured for solitary animals, but we were also able to calculate a minimum dive duration for groups of whales.



Observers on watch for whale blows during the West Falkland yacht survey.
Photo: Donna Evans.

Although we started 24 behavioural follows of sei whales during the West Falkland study, several were abandoned after less than 20 minutes due to uncertainties that we were following the same animals. For example, sometimes whales joined or left the groups, or we became unsure that we were following the same individual when there were multiple animals surfacing unpredictably in an area. The longest submergences recorded in West Falkland were 9.6 min by an individual and 6.1 min by a group. These were a little shorter than the 13.6 and 13.1 min recorded in Berkeley Sound, which may reflect slightly different behaviours in the two regions. For example, whales in Berkeley Sound may be foraging deeper in the water column or simply requiring more submergence time to locate food if their prey

was less abundant than in West Falkland. We found that individuals showed variation in their dive patterns, with some having very regular sequences of longer dives (several minutes duration) separated by three or four quick surfacings at only 35 seconds apart, while others exhibited intermediate dives of around two min duration and only breathed once at the surface in between each dive.



The time of every whale blow was logged during the behavioural follows to calculate dive times. Photo: Caroline Weir.

So what does this mean for conservation and management? Data on dive duration and surfacing characteristics help us to estimate the amount of time that whales spend at, or just below, the water surface, which is important for understanding what proportion of the population can be observed at the surface during a visual sighting survey. It can therefore be used to "correct" population abundance estimates from boat or aerial surveys. Knowledge of the surfacing rate and swim speed of whales is also important for understanding the potential vulnerability of whales to vessel collisions. The collection of undisturbed whale behaviour is essential for identifying how whales are affected by human activities such as seismic exploration, shipping or ecotourism. And it also helps us to understand how whales behave in relation to their environment, for example if particular habitats are used for specific behaviours such as feeding, calving, travel or socialising. A scientific paper has been produced on sei whale behaviour in Berkeley Sound and West Falkland, and the full project report for the West Falkland survey should be available from FC on request at the end of August.

Falklands Conservation is a charity that takes action for nature in the Falkland Islands. We work in conjunction with local and international partners to preserve and protect the unique wildlife, plants and natural features of the Islands. It is only through your support that our work is possible. Thank you.

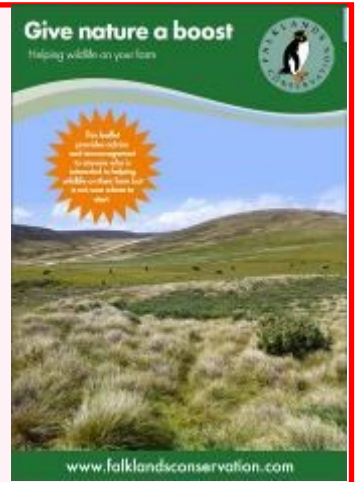
Issue 11
Winter 2018

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New Leaflet Launched

July saw the launch of our new leaflet, Give Nature a Boost: Helping wildlife on your farm.

Inspired by work across the Islands, this leaflet provides advice and encouragement to anyone who is interested in helping wildlife on their farm but is not sure where to start. It includes information and inspirational pictures about protecting good habitat, restoring degraded habitat, biosecurity, and publicising good stewardship stories. Production of the leaflet was kindly supported by the Falkland Islands Government Department of Agriculture and WildGuides.



Brown Gold!

In a bid to reduce waste, Falklands Conservation has gone crazy for compost! We've banished plastic bin bags and introduced a mini-compost container for organic waste like banana peel and tea leaves. Paper, cardboard, and grass cutting all go straight into our compost bin outside. It's full of worms, and after just six months it's already been used for growing native plants.

Composting is easy but there are a few secrets: in particular you need a good mix of "browns" and "greens". "Browns" are carbon rich waste like cardboard and paper. Greens are nitrogen rich, like vegetable scraps and grass cuttings. You need roughly four scoops of "browns" for every scoop of "greens". Turning your compost regularly and keeping it moist speeds up its transformation from scraps to soil, but if you are not in a hurry you can just leave your pile to do its own thing.

We found some useful tips here: <https://modernfarmer.com/2017/02/how-to-compost> and encourage everyone to give it a whirl.



Terrific Tussac Planting on Bleaker Island

In a super collaboration between the Rendell family of Bleaker Island, Falklands Conservation volunteers and a patrol from 4 Scots Regiment, over a hectare of new tussac has been planted on Bleaker. We all had a fun weekend and are grateful to the Rendells for their hospitality, as we stayed in great comfort at Cassard House. This trip continues a long tradition of tussac planting at Bleaker Island. Over 100 years ago, Arthur Cobb recognised the importance of tussac for wildlife and its value as winter shelter and forage for livestock. While there, he oversaw the planting of 145,000 tussac tillers in just 11 days. More recently, the Rendells have also undertaken planting, and often hosted our Watch Group to help out, and they continue to enjoy the benefits recognised by Cobb. Nowadays the extraordinary tussac habitat is also exciting for tourists, and we know that its benefits include the capture of carbon dioxide which it lays down as carbon rich tussac peat. What a terrific legacy.



GIVE AS YOU LIVE – Fundraising for Falklands Conservation

Did you know that you can help Falklands Conservation raise money, without spending any extra yourself? In addition to our JustGiving page where you can donate any amount, there are organisations out there that will donate to us every time you go online to do your shopping.

Give As You Live is a site that works with over 4200 of the UK's biggest retailers; everyone from Amazon, Tesco and Debenhams to booking.com and thetrainline, so whether you're buying new clothes, your weekly food shop, or booking holidays, there are so many options to make sure that a little bit of that money comes back to helping the wildlife of the Falklands. All you have to do is sign up via <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/falklandsconservation>, then use the links on the website to shop with your retailer of choice. From then on, it's all done through your retailer's website as normal. It really is that simple. Just one change in your online shopping habit – opening Give As You Live instead of going straight to your shop – will mean that you're showing that extra bit of support for Falklands Conservation and the work that we do.

SMALL GRANTS SCHEME



Make a difference to your environment.

We can help by funding small grants to get you started.

Grants up to £1,000 are awarded for practical conservation, agri-environmental and educational projects that benefit the wildlife and environment in the Falkland Islands.

Closing date 15th August 2018

Examples of projects:

- Habitat restoration/protection for native plants through planting, management or fencing;
- Restoring eroded or disturbed ground using novel or tested methods;
- Control of invasive animals to reduce impacts on wildlife;
- Control of invasive plants (gorse, thistle etc.) where these are damaging native habitats;
- Enhancing biosecurity measures at places of wildlife importance;
- Wildlife surveys, especially for nature reserves or areas of wildlife importance such as Important Bird and Plant Areas;
- Provision of tourism information including signs, leaflets and guidelines at wildlife sites;
- Enhancement of wild places, nature reserves or places of biological diversity;
- Environmental projects for youth and community groups e.g. creation of native plant gardens, trips to wildlife areas, tussac planting trips, awareness events.
- Small projects to improve waste management and reduce plastic use and pollution, either through outreach or innovation.



How to Apply

Applications will be accepted until 15th August 2018, with grant allocations made by 30th August. Projects should be completed by 30th June the following year (within 10 months of award). Projects should aim to contribute at least 50% towards the total cost - this can be payment in kind such as labour, fuel, accommodation or materials.

For application forms and further information on eligibility or to discuss your project ideas please phone: 22247 or email: cs@conservation.org.fk

British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water

We will once again be attending this year's BirdFair, from the 17th—19th August. Long serving volunteer Margaret Carr will also be speaking at the event on Friday 17th August at 10:30am in the 'Hobby' lecture marquee, about how modern technology is helping with penguin monitoring in the Falklands.

We hope to see you there.

Farmers Week

This year's Falkland Islands Rural Business Association's Farmers Week was another busy week for us all at FC. The week started off with the Expo on Sunday 1st July, a great opportunity to talk to all members of the community about our work, including the Watch Group, Habitat Restoration, the Sei Whale Project, and the Small Grants Scheme. We encouraged visitors to our stall by holding various competitions, which had a large number of entrants.

On the Tuesday, Andy held a talk to inform people about our sei whale work, which had a great turn out. This was all followed by the annual 'Conservation's Curry Night', which was a success as always. Thanks go to Kevin and Glynis at the Stanley Arms for hosting. Thanks also go to all staff for giving up their time to make it a successful week.



Your Data, and The New Data Protection Regulations

Thank you to all of our members that completed and returned the Data Protection Regulations form. If you have not returned your form yet, please do so in order to let us know how you would like to be contacted in the future.

Our promise to you: we will keep your data safe and our communications with you relevant.

We will never sell or pass your personal details to a third party.

You can change how you hear from us or unsubscribe from emails at any time, just let us know by contacting; ukdirector@conservation.org.fk.

For more information, please see our privacy policy at www.falklandsconservation.com

Magellanic
Student £15

Rockhopper
Individual £30

Gentoo
Household £50

King
Gold £100

Albatross
Life £1000



Become a FC Member

Chief Executive Officer: Esther Bertram
Conservation Manager: Andy Stanworth
UK Director: David Spivack
Office Manager: Farrah Peck
Conservation Officer: Sarah Crofts
Community Engagement Manager: Liz Milston
Habitat Restoration Officer: Frin Ross
Administrative Officer: Michelle Winnard
Not all opinions expressed in this newsletter are necessarily those of Falklands Conservation



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