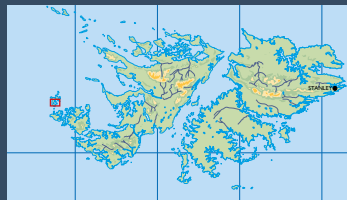


# BEEF ISLAND

## Information sheet



Falklands Conservation own and manage a number of offshore islands and mainland sites across the Falkland Islands. FC strive to manage these national assets to conserve and enhance them for future generation of Islanders.

### Island Summary

Beef Island lies off of New Island settlement between Ship Harbour and South Harbour, in the south-west of the Falklands archipelago. Beef Island is of importance due to its rodent-free status; occurrence of restricted range endemics, Cobb's Wren and tussacbird; the extensive area of tussac grass and small restricted bluegrass habitat; and a population of the *Data Deficient* native *Calandrinia* sp.

### Ecology

#### Physical

Beef Island is approximately 9.7 ha in area, forms a pear-shape 280 x 520m in size, and rises to a height of 50m above sea-level at its crest. From the New Island settlement the island presents a domed silhouette in outline but in cross-section is wedge-shaped with an eastern coastline that is steeply sloped with rock outcroppings at sea-level, whilst the western and northern coastlines slope more gently.

The underlying geology of Beef Island comprises part of the Devonian West Falkland Port Stephen Formation (400 million years pp) characterised by medium and coarse-grained feldspathic sandstones.

Landing is best undertaken on the north-west tip below a now derelict livestock pen.

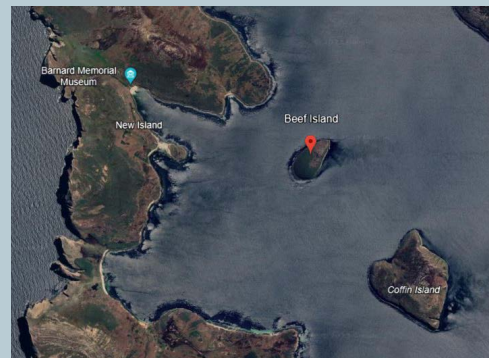
#### Habitat Value

Tussac covers approximately 75% of the island and dominates across the southern half of the island and on the steep coastal slopes. Tussac is healthiest to the south and west and thins towards the north as it transitions to the impacted non-native neutral grassland above the former landing pens.

Neutral grassland occurs across the northern end of the island and is dominated by non-native Yorkshire fog, sheeps sorrel and groundsel. The area is susceptible to both drying, due to the short ground cover, and cyclical dieback of Yorkshire fog, which leads to an erosion risk. In samples taken from Beef Island soil moisture is 4-times wetter and soil depth 2.6-times deeper under the tussac than under the neutral grassland. The degradation of tussac is thought to be a result of grazing concentrated outwards from the landing pens and possibly a past limited fire. The grazing history is unknown but given the lack of water and toponymy it was likely limited to winter grazing of beef.

A small area of bluegrass is present in the transitional mosaic between the tussac and neutral grassland.

The island is rodent-free



**Beef Island** (51.7271° S & 61.2732° W) lies 650m off the east coast of New Island in clear view of the settlement.

### Relevant Legislation and Policy

#### Statutory

None

#### Non-statutory

**Important Bird Area (IBA):** Beef Island is a component part of the New Island Group IBA (IBA FK11). The occurrence of Cobb's wren, striated caracara, tussacbird, ruddy-headed goose and thin-billed prion on Beef Island contribute to the designation

**Key Biodiversity Area (KBA):** Beef Island is part of the New Island Group Priority KBA (FKL-11). Trigger species follow that of the IBA designation.



IMAGES Beef Island from the south; Cobb's wren (inset).



### Species Diversity

A total of 27 bird species have been recorded including 18 breeding species and a further 3 possibly-breeding. All 3 Falkland Islands endemic bird species are present; Cobb's wren, (*Least Concern*); tussacbird, (*Near Threatened*); and Falklands flightless steamer duck (*Least Concern*); along with 7 island-races. At least 6 breeding pairs of striated caracara (*Near Threatened*) and numerous non-breeders are present and likely supported by the population of slender-billed prions that burrow along the slopes. Nesting brown skua are dispersed across the neutral grassland.

23 plant species have been recorded, almost equally split between 11 native species and 12 non-native species. Coastal nassauvia is the only confirmed endemic species which occurs. However, the most intriguing feature of the flora is perhaps the occurrence of the "native Calandrinia", a possible endemic species to the Falkland Islands found at only 8 known sites. The species has been tentatively classified as *Calandrinia cf. nitida* and described as *Data deficient* (FI Red list), however the taxonomy of the group is complex and further study with possible genetic sampling is still required. Beef Island is a haul out site for southern sea lion with small numbers recorded on each visit.

### Key Threats and Management

The island is currently rodent-free. Should rats or mice arrive the impact would be severe leading to the extirpation of the endemic Cobb's wren, and severe depletion of tussacbird numbers among other species. Non-native plant species are already present on Beef Island and die-back cycles of Yorkshire fog especially present an erosion risk. Strict biosecurity checks are in place to ensure there are no inadvertent introductions and restoration activities to promote recolonization by native plants into the neutral grassland are encouraged.

Whilst island visits are infrequent, disturbance may still cause impact. A system of visit permission is in place and visitor guidance is provided. This provides guidance across all sites and also specific guidance such as avoidance of skua nesting sites and slender-billed prions on Beef Island. High fire risk is ongoing on Beef Island and is only likely to increase with forecast climate change. Visitor guidelines and a fire contingency plan are available.

### Notable birds, plants, marine mammals & habitats of Beef Island

Cobb's wren	Endemic   <i>Least Concern</i>	Native Calandrinia <i>cf. nitida</i>	Possible restricted-range Endemic
Tussacbird	Endemic   <i>Near Threatened</i>	Southern sea lion	Haul-out
Falklands flightless steamer duck	Endemic	Southern elephant seal	Haul-out
Striated caracara	Breeding   <i>Near Threatened</i>	Tussac habitat	Mature
Slender-billed prion	Breeding	Bluegrass habitat	Limited extent   Restoration potential
Falkland (brown) skua	Breeding		

**Citation** Falklands Conservation (2022). Beef Island (New Island Group) Management Plan 2022.

### Contact

Conservation Manager, Falklands Conservation.  
[co@conservation.org.fk](mailto:co@conservation.org.fk) or +500 22247

IMAGES Beef Island from Coffin Island; tussacbird (inset).

