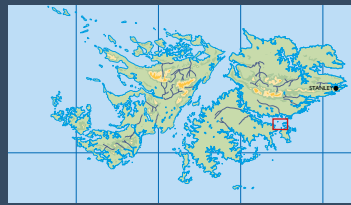


# CENTRE ISLAND

## 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

Centre Island lies at the entrance to Choiseul Sound, 4-km south of the nearest point on the East Falkland mainland. Tussac grass covers the island. It is rodent-free and supports breeding populations of the endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird, along with a range of coastal waterbirds along the surrounding tidal rock platforms.

### Ecology

#### Physical

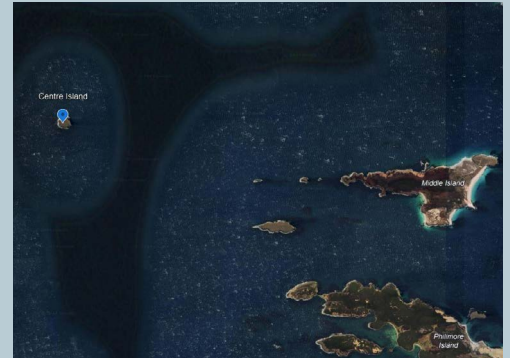
Centre Island covers approximately 4 ha, being roughly circular in shape and rising to 15m in the centre. The south coast comprises of low 1-2m high cliffs above an intertidal rock platform that dries to 10-15m width at low water and extends around the coast from the south east to the northern point. On the east coast (one at the north end, the other at the south) two tiny coves are headed by narrow beaches of rocks and shingle. The underlying geology of Centre Island is that of the Brenton Loch formation dominated by turbidite sandstones, and laminated siltstones and mudstones. Freshwater is limited to coastal drainage seeps.

#### Habitat Value

Centre Island is a good example of a functioning tussac island ecosystem. Continuous dense tussac extends across the island and like many offshore islands it is an important biodiversity reserve.

Centre Island is rodent-free, allowing it to be a refuge for populations of endemic and threatened birds that cannot tolerate the presence of introduced rats and mice, and supports the typical fauna and flora of a well-developed closed canopy tussac island.

IMAGES Centre Island looking south; Falkland steamer duck (inset).



**Centre Island** (51° 56.71'S, 58° 34.01'W) is located in the entrance to Choiseul Sound, lying north-west of Lively Island and south-west of Mare Harbour on the eastern seaboard of East Falkland.

### Relevant Legislation and Policy

#### Statutory

None

#### Non-statutory

**Important Bird Area (IBA):** Centre Island is part of the Lively Island Group Important Bird Area (IBA) (FK010). The trigger species for this designation that are recorded on Centre Island are Cobb's wren, Falkland steamer duck, Magellanic penguin, and tussacbird.

**Key Biodiversity Area (KBA):** Centre Island is part of the Lively Group Priority KBA – FLK10. Trigger species follow that of the IBA and includes the endemic Cobb's Wren that is now limited to only rat and mouse free offshore islands. Threats identified for the KBA includes accidental rodent introduction (Taylor et al. 2016).



### Species Diversity

A total of 19 bird species, of which 16 are confirmed as breeding or probably breeding, have been recorded. This includes the 3 Falkland endemic species (Cobb's wren, tussacbird & Falklands' flightless steamer duck), and 4 island races (Falkland thrush, kelp goose, black-crowned night heron & short-eared owl. The site is

also a probable breeding site for grey-backed storm petrel and a haul-out site for southern sea lions.

Mature tussac stands, whilst highly productive and providing valuable habitat and shelter for a range of wildlife, generally exhibit low plant species diversity. This is the case on Centre Island with only two other additional plant species recorded within the tussac, wild celery and lesser swine-cress.

### Key Threats and Management

Key threats to Centre Island have been investigated and identified, and ongoing management seeks to reduce and mitigate the risks and to ensure that the overall conservation status is maintained or improved.

There is some evidence of occasional historic cattle grazing. This was likely occasional and limited in number due to access difficulties and lack of water sources for stock. The tussac is now fully recovered. No resultant areas of de-vegetation or erosion are evident and there is currently no necessity for replanting or restoration activities.

There is no observed evidence of previous fires. However, given Centre Island's tussac grass and peat soils, fire remains a threat to

the flora and fauna. Fires can be connected to climate change and severe weather and it is not uncommon for lightning strikes to cause fires that have a high impact with permanent degradation of the landscape following soil loss. Fires can also result accidentally from human activities or debris. Strict access guidelines are in place for all visitors and a fire mitigation plan adopted.

Island biosecurity checks are vital to avoid the possible introduction of rodents that would kill-off and remove the endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird from the island and significantly impact other small passerines, petrels and shorebirds. Likewise, the introduction of invasive plant species has the potential to out-compete native plants & modify habitats leading to degradation and loss over time. Full guidance on the required biosecurity checks to complete before any visits is available.

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

Cobb's wren	Endemic   <i>Least Concern (IUCN)</i>	Southern sea lion	Protected
Tussacbird	Endemic   <i>Near Threatened (IUCN)</i>	Tussac (habitat)	Native
Falkland steamer duck	Endemic	Tussac habitat	
Magellanic penguin	<i>Least Concern (IUCN)</i>		

**Citation** none.

### Contact

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IMAGES The landing bay on the north-east coastline of Middle Island; Magellanic penguin (inset, left); southern sea lion (inset, right).

