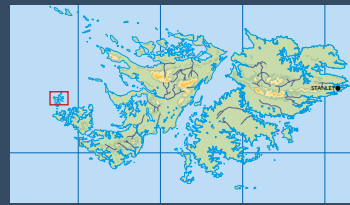


CLIFF KNOB ISLAND

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

Cliff Knob is a small steep-to tussac island on the east side of New Island, in the south-west of the Falkland Islands. The island is rodent-free and holds important local populations of Cobb's wren and tussacbird, along with slender-billed prions and striated caracara.

Ecology

Physical

Cliff Knob is a small domed tussac island with an area of 2 ha, elevation of 25m, and a size of approximately 105 x 255m aligned north to south.

The east side of the island is steep-to with broken loose cliffs. On the western side tussac covered slopes descend in a series of rock steps to the rocky coastline.

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

The island has been only rarely visited and landing is limited to the northern point where a series of rock steps gains access to the upper tussac slopes.

Habitat Value

Due to the small size and difficult access the island has never been grazed and tussac grass dominates in continuous cover where the steep topography permits. There is no evidence of past fire and the tussac habitat is considered as pristine.



Cliff Knob (-51.721° S & 61.2341° W) is situated 420m off the end of Sabina Point, New Island.

Relevant Legislation and Policy

Statutory

New Island South is a statutory designated National Nature Reserve, however the boundary does not extend to Cliff Knob.

Non-statutory

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

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

IMAGES Cliff Knob northern point and landing site from the north-west; striated caracara (inset).



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Species Diversity

Although survey effort has been limited, a total of 11 bird species have been recorded during survey of which 7 are breeding, 2 may possibly be breeding and 2 are recorded only as present. Two of the three Falkland Island endemic bird species breed; Cobb's wren and tussacbird. It is likely that the third, Falkland flightless steamer duck, may also be present at least intermittently but that the steep-to coastline limits coastal nesting habitat.

The tussac slopes and broken rock overlaps provide ideal habitat

for slender-billed prions, many burrows can be identified and prions heard calling and a significant population may exist. This in turn provides for breeding striated caracara (*Near Threatened*). Additional burrow nesting small storm or diving petrel species may be present but have not been surveyed for or confirmed.

Only two plant species have been recorded on Cliff Knob; native tussac grass and introduced groundsel. Low plant diversity is relatively common within a tussac monoculture

Cliff Knob is a small but well used haul out site for southern sea lion, but there is no indication of breeding.

Key Threats and Management

Cliff Knob is seldom landed on which minimises the disturbance and biosecurity risks. A system of visit permission is in place and strict visitor guidance is provided.

The island has remained rodent-free despite being only 420m from New Island. This is likely the result of only Ship's (Black) rat being present on New Island, which is known to be a less proficient

swimmer than the Norway (Brown) rat. The arrival of rodents would be catastrophic to the endemic passerines and smaller petrels and thus all visits must ensure strict biosecurity checks to ensure there are no inadvertent introductions.

High fire risk is ongoing on Cliff Knob 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 Cliff Knob Island

Cobb's wren	Endemic Least Concern	Slender-billed prion	Breeding
Tussacbird	Endemic <i>Near-Threatened</i>	Southern sea lion	Haul-out
Striated caracara	<i>Near-Threatened</i>	Tussac habitat	
Southern giant petrel	Least Concern ACAP		

Citation none.

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IMAGES Cliff Cliff Knob cliffs on its steep south-east coastline; Cobb's wren (inset).

