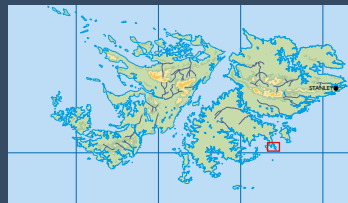


# MOTLEY ISLAND & THE MOT

## 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

Motley Island and The Mot lie about 1km east of Motley Point on the eastern seaboard of East Falkland. The Mot is most notable for its sooty shearwater colony, whilst Motley has important populations of the endemic and globally *Endangered* hairy daisy, nationally *Vulnerable* Fuegian foxtail the nationally rare yellow orchid. Sea lions breed on Motley Island whilst haul-out sites for both sea lions and southern elephant seals occur on both islands.

### Ecology

#### Physical

Motley Island covers approximately 330 ha, with The Mot covering 10ha. Both are low lying with a maximum altitude of 15m. The coastline is generally rocky with wave cut rock platforms exposed at low tide backed by cliffs of up to 3-4m height and a number of steep cobble beaches. There are also two sandy beaches deposited by wave action on Motley with wind-blown dunes occurring at two sites behind these beaches.

There is a small pond (c. 50m at its longest) in the south-eastern part of Motley fed from a shallow catchment. There is some evidence in recent years that the catchment is drying and the pond may become seasonal in the future. A further series of small pools align along a drainage line and shallow valley draining to the west in the centre-north of the island. No open water bodies are recorded on The Mot.

The underlying geology of Motley & The Mot is that of the Brenton Loch formation dominated by turbidite sandstones, and laminated siltstones and mudstones.

#### Habitat Value

The Mot is typical of dense ungrazed tussac habitat with a continuous closed canopy. The dense tussac provides for a highly productive habitat and high rates of carbon sequestration but has a resultant low diversity of plant species with only 4 species recorded. Meanwhile, Motley is tussac fringed with a botanically rich interior comprised of a range of open habitats. Motley & The Mot have a relatively rich bird assemblage due to the rodent-free status of both islands and the varied mix of habitats. Eleven habitat types occur on Motley Island including exceptional examples of bluegrass grassland, along with tussac and coastal heath.



**Motley Island** (52°08'00" S & 58°36'30" W) is located on the eastern coast of the Falkland Islands, at the southern end of Lively Sound. The long axis of the island is oriented roughly north-south with the closest point to the mainland, 1000m distant, at the northern end. The smaller Mot lies a further 450m to the south.

### Relevant Legislation and Policy

#### Statutory

None

#### Non-statutory

**Important Bird Area (IBA):** Motley Island and The Mot are part of the Lively Island Group Important Bird Area (IBA) (FK010). The trigger species for the designation are Cobb's wren, tussacbird, Falkland Island steamer duck, Magellanic penguin, ruddy-headed goose, and white-bridled finch.

**Important Plant Area (IPA):** Motley Island is an Important Plant Area (IPA 12). Triggers for the designation are one of the largest populations of the endemic and globally *Endangered* (IUCN) hairy daisy, along with good examples of the priority habitats bluegrass acid grassland and bluegrass dune grassland habitats.

**Key Biodiversity Area (KBA):** Motley Island is part of the Lively Group Priority KBA - FLK10. Trigger species follow those of the IBA & IPA designations.

**IMAGES** Motley Island looking south from the northern point; sooty shearwater (inset, left); lady's slipper (inset, right).



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### Species Diversity

On Motley 44 bird species have been recorded with 33 species known to breed. This includes all 3 Falkland Islands endemic bird species (Cobb's wren, tussacbird & Falklands steamer duck). The recent confirmed breeding of striated caracara represents an expansion of this *Near-Threatened* species along the Falklands' east coast.

12 bird species have been recorded on the Mot. The most notable is breeding sooty shearwaters within the tussac of the south-eastern point, one of only 8 known breeding locations in the Falkland Islands.

Plant surveys have counted 71 native plants across Motley, including 5 endemic plants (Lady's slipper, hairy daisy, vanilla daisy, coastal nassauvia & Falklands smooth ragwort). The site is important for holding the largest known population of the endemic and globally *Endangered* (IUCN) hairy daisy, alongside populations of the nationally *vulnerable* Fuegian foxtail, and the nationally scarce yellow orchid.

Small numbers of southern sea lions breed on Motley and possibly on The Mot. Southern elephant seals haul out on both Motley (30-40) and the Mot (20-30) but are not known to breed.

### Key Threats and Management

Motley was formerly grazed but since stock was removed in 1995 bluegrass has expanded across the northern dune areas and the remnant tussac fringe has largely recovered around the southern half of the island and on the northern point. However, the central area of the island still shows the impacts of past grazing. The loss of the tussac fringe has caused bare peat exposures and ongoing wind erosion. A restoration programme of tussac and bluegrass replanting is underway to attempt to stabilise and revegetate these areas.

There is no evidence that The Mot has ever been grazed but there is evidence of past fire from which the island has recovered. Fire remains a threat given the sensitivity of tussac and peat soils on both islands, especially given the expected ongoing drying of the climate due to climate change. Visitor guidance and fire contingency plans

are available for both islands and smoking and naked flames are prohibited.

The introduction of rodents would cause the localised extirpation of Cobb's wren and tussacbird and have been shown to depress songbird and shorebird numbers through resource competition and habitat restoration through plant seed consumption. Strict biosecurity should be observed before any visit to the island.

Introduction of invasive plant species may also impact the native habitats and plant species present. 28 non-native plant species are already present, but only 3 species are categorised as invasive: lyme grass, curly dock & prickly-sow thistle. The small area of lyme grass has already been removed, whilst dock and sow-thistle should be opportunistically removed when encountered. Biosecurity measures are important to prevent any further introductions and all clothing and equipment should be carefully cleaned and checked by any visitors before landing.

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

Cobb's wren	Endemic   Least concern	Lady's slipper	Endemic
Tussacbird	Endemic   Near threatened	Smooth Falklands daisy	Endemic
Falklands steamer duck	Endemic	Vanilla daisy	Endemic
Magellanic penguin	Near threatened	Falkland cudweed	Near endemic
Striated caracara	Near threatened	Fuegian foxtail	Nationally vulnerable
Sooty shearwater	Near threatened	Yellow orchid	Nationally vulnerable
Southern elephant seal	Haul-out	Tussac habitat	
Southern sea lion	Breeding	Bluegrass acid grassland habitat	Nationally threatened
Hairy daisy	Endemic   Endangered	Bluegrass dune grassland habitat	Nationally threatened
Coastal nassauvia	Endemic		

**Citation** Falklands Conservation. (2021). Motley Island Management Plan 2021.

### Contact

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IMAGES Magellanic penguins.

