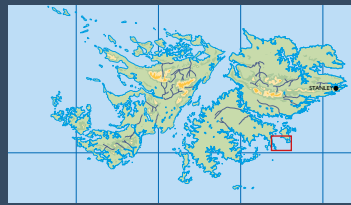


SAL ISLAND

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

Sal Island lies just a few hundred metres west of Lively Island within Lively Sound, off the eastern seaboard of East Falkland. It is a breeding site for Southern sea lion and considered a near-pristine tussac island with no evidence of previous fire, grazing, or human influence. Sal is rodent-free and supports breeding populations of the endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird. It may also support breeding populations of burrowing storm and/or diving petrels.

Ecology

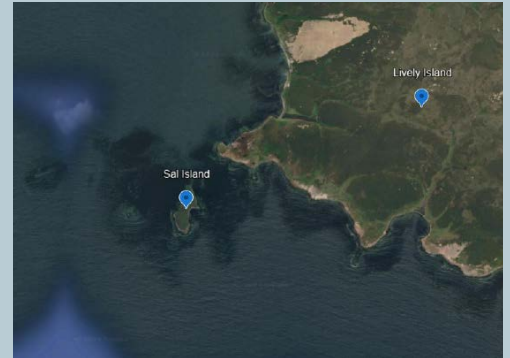
Physical

Sal Island is half a kilometre long and covers approximately 8 ha. It is generally low lying with a maximum altitude of only around 5m. The coastline generally comprises of a tidal wave-cut platform backed by low rocky cliffs of a few metres height. Towards the north-east of the island a sloping shingle beach faces south forming a shallow, though exposed, bay.

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

Habitat Value

Sal Island represents a near pristine tussac island with dense highly productive tussac grass stretching across the island. Tussac grass provides an important sheltered habitat for a range of fauna and is an important peat-building habitat for carbon sequestration, however the dense closed canopy cover suppresses other plant growth and plant species diversity is relatively low.



Sal Island (-52.064643°S & -58.534611°W) is located in Lively Sound off the east coast of the Falkland Islands. Adjacent to Lively Island, it sits approximately 480m to the west of Lively Island across thick kelp, and 7 km east of the Walker Creek coastline of mainland East Falkland across Lively Sound.

Relevant Legislation and Policy

Statutory

None

Non-statutory

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

Key Biodiversity Area (KBA): Sal Island is part of the Lively Group Priority KBA - FLK10. Trigger species follow those of the IBA designation.

IMAGES Sal Island looking north-west; Falkland steamer duck (inset).



Species Diversity

A total of 23 bird species, including 19 breeding species, have been recorded during island survey visits. This includes all three Falkland Islands endemic bird species (Cobb's wren, tussacbird, & Falklands steamer duck), 6 restricted range island-races, and a high density of Magellanic penguins. In addition small burrows within the tussac and the remains of many small petrels have been found suggesting that storm petrels or diving petrels breed on the island. Whilst not definitively identified at least some of the remains relate to grey-backed storm petrels.

The island is an important breeding site for Southern sea lions with breeding counts increasing from 47 pups in year 2003 to 83 pups in year 2014, suggesting population recovery. Breeding is primarily focused around the shingle beach and adjacent rock platforms.

In contrast to the high faunal diversity and productivity, floral diversity is more limited due to the dense tussac cover. Only 4 other native species have been recorded growing within the tussac and splash-zone; wild celery, native stonecrop, buttonweed and thrift plantain. An additional two non-native species are recorded; sheep's sorrel and groundsel are both widespread and naturalised across the islands.

Key Threats and Management

No evidence of past grazing, fires or human management actions has been recorded. This is likely due to the thick kelp surrounding the island and its exposed location, open to southern ocean swells, making landings difficult.

Fire is an ongoing threat given the high flammability of tussac and peat soils. Furthermore the threat may increase given the expected continued drying of the Falklands due to climate change. Visitor guidance and fire contingency plans are available for both islands, and smoking and naked flames are prohibited.

The island is rodent-free and the introduction of rats or mice would be catastrophic for the islands bird life. Rodents would cause the localised extirpation of Cobb's wren and tussacbirds and significantly impact any small burrow nesting petrels. Rats have also been shown to depress both songbird and shore bird numbers through resource competition and to inhibit habitat restoration through seed consumption. Introduction of invasive plant species or could also impact the native habitats and plant species present. Biosecurity measures are important to prevent any impacts and all clothing and equipment should be carefully cleaned and checked by any visitors before landing.

Notable birds, plants, marine mammals & habitats of Sal Island

Cobb's wren	Endemic Least concern	Diving &/or Storm petrels	Likely but unconfirmed
Tussacbird	Endemic Near threatened	Southern sea lion	Breeding
Falklands steamer duck	Endemic	Tussac grass habitat	
Magellanic penguin	Least Concern		

Citation none.

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IMAGES The south-east facing shingle and cobble beach on the eastern side of the island is a breeding location for southern sea lion; Magellanic penguin (inset).

