



# PENGUIN APPEAL

## WORKING WITH PENGUINS IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS: 2004-05

The Falkland Islands, a UK Overseas Territory in the remote South Atlantic, is one of the most important locations for penguins in the world. Donations to **Penguin Appeal** have helped us provide protection, enabled essential monitoring of penguin colonies, and supported practical conservation to benefit all penguin species. Contributions to Penguin Appeal from Zoos in 2004-05 year totalled £3,854. We are very grateful to everyone and every Zoo for these donations.

The magnificent King penguin is at the northerly edge of its range here.



These birds are particularly at risk because its egg is carried on its feet – once the egg is displaced it is never recovered. The largest King penguin colony in the Falklands is at Volunteer Point. This year **Penguin Appeal** has provided new interpretation boards (with extra help from Edinburgh Zoo) for the 1,000 tourists who come here. We hope

this will contribute, with other measures, to making sure that visitor behaviour does not cause undue disturbance to the breeding birds. We have continued to visit the site on a regular basis, advising the resident wardens and monitoring breeding success. This year 215 chicks were present. This number has declined for the past three years. It may be a natural slow down in reproduction, as has happened at other locations, following a rapid increase in numbers between 1960 and 1990 (there were only 38 chicks in 1980). However, there could be other factors at work and they may be suffering from oceanographic changes. Through diet sampling and monitoring Falklands Conservation is closely checking the health of this important penguin colony.

The Falklands has over 100,000 Gentoo penguins. Every year, with support from **Penguin Appeal**, selected colonies are counted. This year 11,457 gentoos were present compared with 10,191 at the same sites last year. This represents an 12% increase, with a breeding success of 1.15 chicks – the most successful year since our records began. This is a snapshot of a few locations and an indication that numbers are recovering from problems in previous years such as algal bloom poisoning. A full Islands-wide count (planned for later this year) will discover if the population has recovered and is as healthy as it seems.

Magellanic penguins nest in burrows dug out of the peaty ground.

Breeding success is monitored measuring the density of occupied burrows, which this year showed an increase at a limited number of sites. Research has continued into the best way of assessing the total number of this species in the Falklands, in preparation for an attempt to measure the Islands-wide population in 2006.



The Falklands hold 40% of the world's population of Rockhopper penguins, the smallest of the Islands' species. They have suffered a long term decline in numbers, but in the colonies monitored numbers went up from 2,982 breeding pairs in 2003-04 to 3,320 in 2004-05. This is encouraging, but only one year at a few colonies.

During the year we have tackled some issues affecting penguins head on. On 19 April 2005 the *Nova Scotia* ran aground leaking heavy fuel oil into the sea. The oil spill was small, but not without effect on seabirds, many thousands of which were around the nearby coast. An oiled rockhopper penguin was rescued, cleaned and released after three days in captivity. Falklands Conservation has mapped the vulnerability of seabirds to oil pollution throughout the year through our at sea surveys which we are now drawing on to advise a renewed interest in oil exploration.

Our work restoring habitats on offshore islands has continued. Efforts concentrated on clearing rats, which predate on ground nesting birds (in the Falklands where there are no native trees, all birds are ground nesting). This year Outer North West Island in Falkland Sound was tackled, and previously cleared islands checked – no rats have returned so far and there are now encouraging signs of birds returning to breed. On Weddell Island the Gentoo penguin colony was the subject of an assessment into the effects of introduced, predatory Patagonian foxes. We hope to be able to advise the landowner on how to control this problem.

Every donation to Penguin Appeal has helped us carry out all this important work, safeguarding the habitat and reducing the threats to these wonderful birds.

For more information visit [www.falklandsconservation.com](http://www.falklandsconservation.com)  
Falklands Conservation is a UK registered charity number: 1073859



## **Falkland Islands Penguin Census 2005/06**

A census of the penguins of the Falkland Islands is being planned for 2005. This important exercise will gather accurate data on the current population of rockhopper, gentoo and king penguin species which all breed here in vast numbers. It will inform future conservation and protection initiatives.

The Falkland Islands are one the world's most important locations for penguins:



***A global stronghold for the rockhopper penguin***



***A quarter of the world's gentoo penguins breed here***



***One of the most northerly King penguin breeding colonies***



***Magellanic are numerous but population total unknown***

Penguin numbers have fluctuated in recent years, following severe declines in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fisheries, exploration for oil, tourism and shipping have all increased in the last decade and may play a part in threats to their healthy survival. Previous counts have taken place in 1995-96 and 2000-01.



***In 2002 a red algal bloom in Falkland waters poisoned many birds. There has been no Islands-wide count of penguin populations since this unfortunate event.***



***Dead Gentoo penguin poisoned by the red algal bloom***

The census will be undertaken by Falklands Conservation, a non-profit charity, which is the BirdLife International partner in the Islands. There will be three teams. Two will be land based - one on East Falkland and one on West Falkland. A boat based team will cover penguin colonies on the many offshore islands around the entire coastline. It will be carried out between late October and December 2005 and is expected to take a total of five weeks. The first Islands' survey of Magellanic penguins will be undertaken in March 2006.