

Bird Fair



Last years Conservation marquee.

Photo: R. Woods

the aim of uniting birdwatchers from around the world, and to support international conservation projects. The Rutland Water Reserve was chosen as the location due to it being a RAMSAR (protected wetland) site and special protection area. It had also been the host of a smaller event, 'The Wildfowl Bonanza' in previous years, proving it to be a suitable area in which to host

The British Bird Watching Fair is a 3-day event held each year at Rutland Water in the East Midlands, UK. The purpose of the Bird Fair is to raise money and awareness for wildlife projects and organisations around the world, this year it is being held on the 15th to the 17th of August.

Last year the Fair raised a record-breaking £226,000 for Birdlife's project 'Preventing Extinctions: Saving the World's Critically Endangered Birds'. This particular project is being supported by the Fair from 2007 to 2009, with several of the world's 189 critically endangered bird species being put under the spotlight.

The Bird Fair was started in 1989, by Tim Appleton and Martin Davies, with

the Bird Fair.

Over 18,000 visitors attend the event, with 300 marquees set up to allow organisations to exhibit their products and advertisements. Since its conception, a total of £1,400,000 has been raised to conserve birds in their natural habitats all over the world.

Both Falklands Conservation and the Falkland Islands Tourist Board have marquees at the event, with Ann Brown representing Falklands Conservation. Last year, Ann managed to encourage a lot of interest, recruiting 18 new members to Falklands Conservation. We hope this year she is just as successful!

If you wish to find more information about the Bird Fair, please visit the website: www.birdfair.org.uk



Falklands Conservation Newsletter

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Robin Woods Honoured with MBE

Congratulations to Robin Woods, a long standing Falklands Conservation Trustee, who received an MBE in the 2008 Queen's Birthday Honours for his services to the conservation of wildlife in the Falkland Islands.

Robin's involvement with Falklands Conservation goes back nearly 30 years to 1980 when Sir Peter Scott invited him to serve on the Advisory Council of the Falkland Islands Foundation. He has been a trustee of Falklands Conservation for the past 13 years and was Chairman from 2001-2004. His interest in the natural history of the Islands dates from 1956 when he was posted to the Islands as a meteorologist, and where he lived until 1963. He maintained this interest back in the UK by writing-up his wildlife researches, his involvement with Falklands Conservation, and through occasional visits and contact with local people and visiting scientists. He has been a tireless field worker from early days

ringing albatross on West Point Island to leading the more recent Johnny Rook Surveys. Since his retirement, in 1995, he has visited the Falkland Islands almost every year to do fieldwork, surveys and research, and as a result has probably visited more uninhabited offshore islands than anyone else. He has also settled once and for all how many islands there are in the Falklands (780)

by studying maps to count them all ('genuine islands, not small rock pinnacles where one would get wet feet at high tide'). His many natural history books and publications have contributed enormously to our ecological knowledge of the Islands and continue to enthuse residents and visitors alike. Back in the UK, Robin has been a very active fundraiser, and for the past 11 years has run (with his wife Anne) our 3-day stand at the British

Birdwatching Fair. No-one has worked harder than he has in the role of an unpaid volunteer and this well-deserved honour recognises his outstanding contribution made over the past 50 years. Robin has requested to receive his Award from the Governor when he is next in the Islands, the special ceremony will take place on 10 September.

Ann Brown, UK Executive Officer



Robin and Anne Woods on Falklands Conservation's stand at the British Birdwatching Fair

Extinct Plant Rediscovered on St. Helena

A plant thought to be extinct for 200 years has been rediscovered on the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic. The renamed 'Neglected Tuft Sedge' (*Bulbostylis neglecta*) has not been seen since 1806, nine years before Napoleon was exiled to the Island.

It was rediscovered by a member of the South Atlantic Invasive Species Project, Dr Phil Lambdon, who has found many more of the tiny plants since the primary discovery.

The South Atlantic Invasive Species Project is managed by the RSPB, funded by the European Commissions EDF funds, and supported by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and

the government of St Helena. The project is managed by Clare Miller, who stated that the reason for extinctions on the island lay mainly with the impact of introduced species. She went on to say: "Goats, gorse, grasses, and cage birds have all been liberated on the island where they have wreaked



havoc with the native species."

Although there are samples of the species collected in the 1800s at Kew, Dr Lambdon was astounded to find so many living plants, increasing numbers to an estimated 4000 now thought to be present on the island. This may sound like a large number, but as they are endemic to St. Helena and particularly vulnerable to the effects of introduced species on the island, it is important that measures are put in place to protect them for future years. The RBG Kew intend to collect seed samples of the sedge, to be placed in Kew's Millennium Seed Bank along with 22,000 other species of wild flowering plant.

Falklands Conservation

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A full list of Trustees is available on request from our offices.
The Newsletter is edited by Gill Cotter
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The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Falklands Conservation.

Penguin Identification

Scientists at the University of Bristol and the University of Cape Town have teamed up to test a new recognition system for identifying penguins in the field. They have developed a computer programme which recognises and counts individual penguins without using invasive techniques. Using the African penguin, *Spheniscus*

demersus, as a test subject, a camouflaged camera is placed in the penguins path, where it films them, this is relayed to a computer system. This system identifies the species and then the individual, by studying its chest patterns and comparing them to others on the database. Presently, the COMBINED (Compu

terised Monitoring and Biomimetic Identification in Natural Environments) team are doing further testing of the system on a penguin population of 20,000 birds on Robben Island, S. Africa. Perhaps in future years the Falklands will adopt similar technology, to enable us to count penguins effectively, with less disturbance to the animals?? If you are interested in this project, please visit: www.spotthepenguin.com

Oliver the Oiled King Penguin

Oliver the oiled King penguin was found at Cat Cove, West Point Island on the 11th July. Kicki Ericson and Thies Matzen (caretakers at West Point settlement) rescued the bird, and put him



Oli was coated in oil when he was found. Photo by Thies Matzen

in a make-shift pen. He was washed, but due to him being covered in very thick black heavy oil, he needed three washes which still didn't manage to remove all of the oil. Initially it seemed that this unlucky penguin was not going to have an easy time, not only was his bill very damaged but the bottom mandible had suffered severe trauma as a result of some kind of accident, possibly a collision with a boat. In addition, West Point is quite a remote island, and since the airstrip has been closed access is restricted, posing the problem of how to get a box of fish / squid and other medical necessities to the penguin in an attempt to rehabilitate him.



Luckily, as it happened to be Farmers week in Stanley, Marie Paul Guillaunet, from Dunbar Farm, was heading back to the West and offered kindly to take the essential supplies

out to Dunbar, to be collected by Kicki and Thies by yacht. The unlucky penguin was having a lot of lucky breaks!

Rehabilitation of the penguin was however made more difficult by Oli refusing to take fish, which meant that Kicki and Thies had to mash up and blend fish fillets in to a slurry so he could be tube fed, sometimes up to 7 times a day. Another lucky break arrived when we heard that a British International helicopter was flying out to West Point to drop of a team from Stanley to assess the airstrip, which seemed like a great opportunity to bring Oli in to town so he could receive expert attention. The helicopter was cancelled for a few days however due to foggy weather, but at the very first opportunity the helicopter could fly, it headed straight out to West Point to collect the Oli.. who says penguins can't fly?



The tip of his lower bill has been snapped off by a forceful impact. Photo by Thies Matzen..

On his arrival he generated a lot of curiosity at Heliops at MPC, and FC must take the opportunity to thank British International and especially Sparky Ewan, for organising the penguins helicopter ride. Oli got taken straight to the veterinary dept on his arrival in Stanley and was met by local vet Zoe Luxton. He was in very good condition and weighed over 13kg, a sign that he was indeed a chap and had been appropriately named after all! The first decision to be made was concerning the state of his bill, it was badly damaged and we had to consider if he would be able to fish again for himself once released into the wild. Luckily again for this unlucky penguin, Zoe said she could wire the bottom



Wire was used to bind his lower mandible to allow it to heal.

mandible together, stabilising the damage and giving it a chance to regrow again. Penguin beaks are similar to finger nails, in that when they get worn down they regrow, so hopefully with time the bill will be able to repair itself, and although it will always be a little deformed it hopefully shouldn't stop him from catching fish.

After the ordeal of the pioneering penguin surgery the shaken up penguin was placed in a shed and left to have some quiet time for a few days. We placed him in a "penguin jumper" to prevent him from preening and ingesting the oil that was still in his plumage.

Oli has now been washed and his plumage is back to his natural sparkling white. He has also realised that those dead fish being waved in front of his beak are a good thing and is taking whole fish from the hand.

He will now remain in captivity for 2-3 weeks giving him time to regain his natural waterproofing and also for his bill to mend a little more before being released back to the wild.

Oli the unlucky lucky penguin would like to thank every one involved in his rescue especially: Kicki and Thies at West Point, Marie Paul Guillaunet, British International Heliops, Zoe Luxton, Fisheries Department, Nic Huin, Dan Fowler, Eric Schneider,



Oli was put in a jumper to prevent him from preening and ingesting oil

Sarah Crofts and FC staff for giving him a lucky break!!

Incredibly another oiled king penguin turned up at Cat Cove a few weeks after Oli was found, so Kicki and Thies are again busy with cleaning and rehabilitating this new penguin. As they now they have supplies of fish, the penguin can stay at West Point, and they will look after Olivia (a smaller and most likely female penguin) for a few weeks before being released. At



Although some staining is still present, the oil has been successfully removed.

this stage we are none the wiser where the oil is coming from, a FIGAS fly by could not locate any evident oil spills inshore, or around Cat Cove, so it may be likely that the penguins were oiled further at sea and came up to the closest land. At this time of year King Penguins forage to the north of the Islands on the shelf slopes of the Patagonian shelf, where abundant shipping, fishing and oil exploration activities all increase vulnerability of seabirds to oil.

Endemic Insights

This month the spotlight is on one of my favourite Falkland plants, the false plantain (*Nastanthus falklandicus*). This unusual-looking plant is a member of the rather exclusive family, *Calyceraceae*, which is restricted to South America. The *Calyceraceae* is closely related to the daisy family (*Asteraceae*) and includes around 60 species grouped into six genera.



Nastanthus is one of the richest species of these genera and grows mostly in dry open scrub or steppe vegetation.

In Tierra del Fuego there are three species of *Nastanthus* that grow high up in feldmark and rock screes in open, moist and probably saline grassland, as well as in open sands and gravels low down by coasts and estuaries.

False plantain has acquired its local name because from a distance it is possible to mistake the compact circular mounds of some smaller non-flowering individuals for particular growth forms of the native thrift plantain (*Plantago barbata*).

The false plantain has hairless, rather

fleshy leaves (12-40 mm x 2-4 mm), which are spatula-shaped and a brighter green than the thrift plantain. Its flowers are very different from the latter species with stems up to 20 mm bearing a group of tightly packed white flowers.

The cluster of flowers is 4-8 cm in diameter and most commonly hemispherical but can take on a range of beautifully abstract shapes. Each flower is a delicate five-lobed tube and at just 3 mm in length it is tiny.

David Moore first recorded the false plantain back in 1964 in the Ten Shilling Bay area of Port Stephens and intriguingly it has only ever been recorded from this area and the nearby Cross Island. This makes it one of the most range-restricted endemics in the Falklands. It can be found growing in exposed sites that are strongly influenced by sea-spray, where the ground cover is generally low with sand, sandy peat or gravel substrate. False plantain has long taproots that make it ideally suited to such well-drained sites.



Photo taken by Eric Schneider

Its limited geographical distribution and endemic status are the main reasons why the false plantain is currently listed as globally threatened and of prime conservation concern.



Coastal plants such as spiky grass (*Poa robusta*), wild celery (*Apium australe*) and Emerald bog (*Colobanthus subulatus*) never seem to be far off when a false plantain population is found. Population sizes vary from several scattered individuals up to around 1000 individuals.

Most False plantain plants displayed only vegetative growth during March of this year with proportions of flowering individuals ranging from under 1% to 15% of the population. There was also evidence that individuals in some populations had flowered and died.

It is not yet understood why the false plantain is so limited in its distribution so there is a lot yet to discover about the ecology of this unique species.

By Rebecca Upson,
Plant Conservation Officer