



# FALKLANDS CONSERVATION

## NEWSLETTER

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## Census of the Giant-Petrel Population of the Falkland Islands

As part of the commitments of the project on the conservation of Albatross and Petrels breeding in the Falkland Islands, the first full census of the Southern Giant-petrel was conducted in the breeding season of 2004/05. This survey was conducted successfully and all known and suspected colonies of the islands were surveyed between November 2004 and March 2005. In November and December all nests with breeding adults incubating were counted at each individual colony. In January, February and March 2005 all chicks present, as well as their present parents were counted. Each colony was either surveyed by land, where direct counts were made or by air, where aerial photographs were taken and breeding pairs were subsequently counted. 13 colonies, or sub-colonies were counted both during incubation and chick-rearing periods. These were used to estimate an average breeding success. Such breeding success was then used to estimate the original number of breeding pairs in colonies where only chicks were counted in the second half of the season.

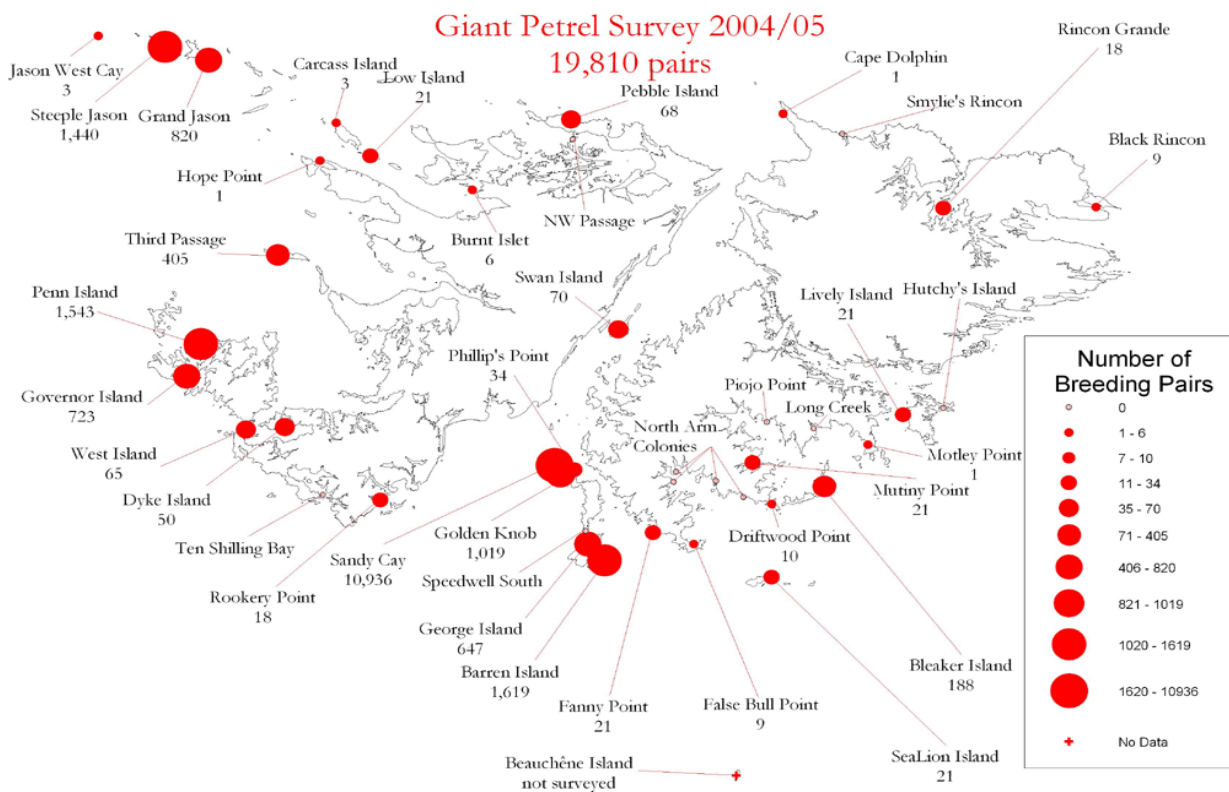
Variations in number of birds counted and in breeding success were used to give an estimate of the error inherent to such a census.

A total of 47 sites were visited during the census (Table 1). Four sites didn't hold any breeding adults during the census, but did have in the past and may in future years. A further 7 sites didn't hold any chicks when visited, but may have had breeding adults originally. The remaining 38 sites held between one and 10,986 breeding pairs. One site was counted during chick-rearing both from land and from aerial photography. The difference between the two methods was less than 10%, which is more than acceptable. Variation within direct counts on this site, however, was less than 1% and results from this method were retained in the final figure. The grand total of this census revealed that there were a total of 19,810 breeding pairs in the Falkland Islands. This average estimate ranges between a minimum of 19,400 and 20,850 breeding pairs.

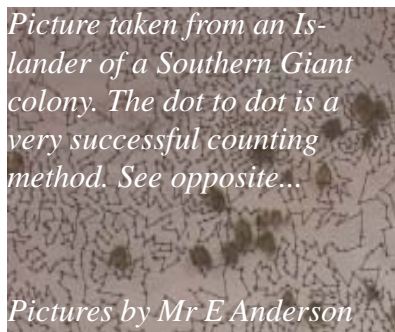


The range of error is of about 1,400 pairs, which is around 7% of the total. This is a very acceptable error inherent to the methods employed for such a census. The distribution and size of the breeding colonies can be seen in the map provided below. It shows two main concentrations of giant petrels. The first one is situated on the west of West Falklands and comprises around 26% of the Falkland Islands giant petrel population. The second and most important area is situated in the south of Falkland Sound and holds 72% of the Falkland Islands population.





The next phase of the work on giant petrels will be, first to produce a final complete report of the census. This will involve a more detailed account of the methods and results as well as general background information on this species and conservation issues concerning it. Also of importance, will be to put into context the



results of this first island-wide census with previous knowledge of this species, both locally and in terms of the importance of the Falkland Islands to the worldwide population of this species. It will also develop a framework of future monitoring of this species in the islands. This will include not only, how best to monitor trends in the local population size, but also attempts to describe any significant lack of knowledge about the ecology and threats of this species and how best to remedy them. The most dramatic result of this census is that 19,800 pairs of giant petrels breed in the Falkland Islands. It is much greater than the

previous estimation of between 5,000 and 10,000 breeding pairs and that the world population of around 31,000 breeding pairs must be re-evaluated in light of these findings.



*Nic Huin & Tim Reid  
Falklands Conservation  
April 2005*

## Conservation Management at

### Sea Lion Island by Emma Philip

It's a far cry from Caledonian pinewoods and capercaillie but at least I knew a little about management planning for nature conservation on protected sites! So, to tussac and penguins on a small South Atlantic island and the preparation of the Sea Lion Island Management Plan.

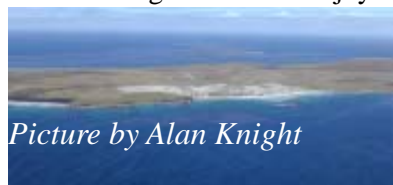
Sea Lion Island is one of only two designated Ramsar<sup>1</sup> sites in the Falklands, internationally important for it's wetland habitats and the associated wildlife these support. As such it is also proposed as a National Nature Reserve. Sea Lion Island is owned by Falkland Islands Development

Corporation (FIDC), who bought the island in 1991, for the purpose of conserving the island, it's wildlife and it's habitats. In addition, with the facility of the Lodge, there was also the desire to maintain a sustainable eco-tourism business, which in turn, with the rising number of visitors Sea Lion attracts, would provide an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of

the Falklands unique natural heritage.

So, what positive conservation management can those involved at Sea Lion do, to ensure that the wildlife and their habitats continue to thrive and visitors continue to experience a relatively unspoilt wilderness, where wildlife really is still in charge? This is where a management plan comes in and my task was to write it.

The management plan basically sets out the aims and objectives for the management of the island and provides a framework of identified tasks and projects, including monitoring and surveys which are required in order to achieve the long term aims. Paramount to the successful management of Sea Lion is ensuring there is minimal visitor impact on the wildlife and habitats, not only for the wildlife but also for maintaining the very attraction that most visitors to Sea Lion Island go to see and enjoy.



*Picture by Alan Knight*



A key aspect in the delivery of the conservation and visitor management is the role of the Sea Lion Island warden. This season, Falklands Conservation and Sea Lion Lodge have been extremely fortunate to have had a volunteer warden, Kirsty Denley out at Sea Lion. Kirsty arrived at Sea Lion last November, she was very keen to get involved in conservation and working with wildlife in their natural habitats.

Needless to say, Kirsty seized the opportunity to take an early draft of the management plan and go about achieving as many of the projects she realistically could. Five months later, she is a familiar face at Sea Lion and has completed and commenced a number of projects. We now have a baseline bird survey and records of numbers of breeding birds on the island, the tussac areas have been accurately mapped, so that we can monitor tussac regeneration and, Kirsty has also identified areas suitable for commencing a tussac replanting programme. Of course, central to a warden's role on a National Nature Reserve is the contact they have with visitors. It is essential that visitors are made to feel welcomed and that their stay is an enjoyable one. Kirsty has done an excellent job of providing informative and thorough visitor briefs and guided walks aimed at facilitating visitors' enjoyment and raising awareness and understanding of the unique wildlife and habitats of Sea Lion. As the visitor season is now close to an end, Kirsty has finished at Sea Lion but, she has left us with a real head start for the future conservation and visitor management of Sea Lion Island. Thank you Kirsty!



There has of course, been other conservation work at Sea Lion this season and which also forms part of the management plan. Sea Lion Lodge Limited continue to maintain the island rat, mice and cat free and have been the point of contact of various projects including, two beach clearances, one by the Stanley WATCH group and the other by Mount Pleasant Primary School.



*Picture by Alan Knight*

Also, with the help of volunteers from MPA, way-markers along the desired route to the bird hide where laid out in an attempt to avoid accidental disturbance to the breeding southern giant petrel colony close by. Furthermore, the Elephant Seal Research Group completed their 9th consecutive field season, with the exciting news that one of the male pups they tagged in their first year in 1995, has returned and managed to successfully defend his very first harem this year. So, next year he should be a Dad!



Falklands Conservation has also been active on Sea Lion Island with the annual penguin surveys and the 2004/05 giant petrel census. We have also been providing guided wildlife tours to visiting groups arriving by commercial helicopter from cruise liners visiting Stanley and provided grant support for the first cetacean photographic identification records of the Falklands.



*Picture by Alan Knight*

In March, we also had some good news. Falklands Conservation bid to obtain funds for implementing some of the interpretation plans for Sea Lion Island has been successful. So, by next season, we hope to have a new Reserve leaflet and interpretation panels at key locations around the island, all aimed at increasing the visitor's awareness and appreciation of the natural heritage that they are being so privileged to see.

This is an exciting time for local positive nature conservation and environmental education in the

Falklands and I for one, will look forward to hearing of the progress being made at Sea Lion Island.

<sup>1</sup> Ramsar - Internationally protected sites designated under the 'Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat' 1976.



*Picture by Alan Knight*



*Picture by Alan Knight*



*Picture by Alan Knight*

## Albatross Shield 2005

Unfortunately due to the force 9 that blew on Saturday the 26th of March the Albatross Shield had to be postponed until the following weekend.

With a tee off time of 10am 13 golfers took to the course for a shotgun start. With the now traditional 3 club stableford causing many decision changes right up to the last minute it was anybody's game. The final result came in with 3rd place going to Andy Black who

(as he put it just hacks around!) with a score of 33 narrowly missing out on second which went to Wayne Clement on 34 points and the winner of the competition was Kevin Clapp on 35, so a good close game, congratulations.

Falklands Conservation would like to thank all those who turned out (twice in many cases!) and to those who gave their support by purchasing raffle tickets, congratulations to those lucky winners. We must give special mention to The Falklands Brasserie for the meal for two, Sea Lion Lodge for the two night



stay for two, the Gift Shop with the donation of a bottle coaster, FIDF who gave a day for four, the Fisheries for a day on the Dorada, the Fire Department for the donation of a bottle of Gin and Mr Vincent who donated the lovely prize for the longest drive won by Glen Ross.

The funds raised will go to the Albatross and Petrel Team and this year the event helped raise in excess of £450 pounds, Falklands Conservation would like to again thank everyone involved and to Fortuna for their generous donation towards the project.

### **FALKLANDS CONSERVATION**

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