

Falklands Conservation



Newsletter

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Albatross and Petrel International Workshop 12th - 15th March

Falklands Conservation Albatross and Petrel Programme gear up for the International Workshop

In September Falklands Conservation announced the upcoming *Albatross and Petrel Workshop: Priorities and Conservation* to members. The date was set for March 2006, which, at that point seemed like a long way off. Now as we move rapidly into February, the workshop is looming up on the horizon and the arrangements are stepping up into the next gear.

The initial hope was for approximately 20 representatives from abroad plus some local attendance. This has been surpassed and the attendance is looking to be closer to 35 - 40 delegates, showing just how important the subjects of discussion are considered to be in the regional and international community.

There will be several major points that will be considered carefully by the line up of attendees with some definite conclusions to be reached before the four-day workshop draws to a close. Essentially, after an initial period of presentations that will aim to bring all attendees up to date with current research and developments in each locality the main topics will be:

Breeding sites – threats to colonies, management options and policy

Foraging areas – Survey data and tracking studies

Population status and trends – historical data and the change in populations

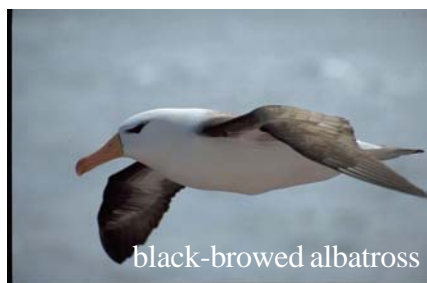
Fishery issues – questions relating to by-catch and observer coverage in longline and trawl fisheries

Education and awareness – getting the information from the scientists to the people in contact with the birds

Implementation – putting together the best possible way of managing all of the above and ensuring that limited funds are spent where most needed for the benefit of the albatross.

All of the issues that will be discussed will be reflecting directly on the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) and results will feed straight into the UK report to the agreement as well as seriously influence the future of the Falkland Islands albatross conservation work. It is a huge honour for the islands to hold such an event and the experience and benefits gained will be far reaching indeed.

The workshop is funded from the FCO Overseas Territories Environment Programme and Falkland Islands Government sponsored Albatross and Petrel Programme and additional assistance has been received Consolidated Fisheries Ltd.



Further details and reports on the delegates and subjects discussed at the Falklands Conservation Albatross and Petrel Programme Workshop will be in the next Newsletter.

New Wardens at Sea Lion Island

The posts of Conservation Wardens at Sea Lion Island have been taken up by Lindsey and Morag for the summer season. This is their first visit to the Falkland Islands and they are thoroughly enjoying the diversity of wildlife surrounding them as reported in the following article by Morag .

The season was off to an exciting start with an estimated 550 female elephant seals coming ashore to breed – not to mention the massive bulls. The island has been strewn with tiny wee elephant seal pups, with one even making it up to the runway! Having been abandoned by their mothers for the last 20 or so days, the pups are very hungry and are gathering in shallow rock pools practising their swimming skills before heading off to the ocean to feed. If only they knew what awaited them... Killer whales are regularly seen now, patrolling up and down the coastline in search of a tasty meal. Guests are thrilled by their antics in the water.

Watch Group trip to Sea Lion Island

Sixteen members of the Watch Group, aged between eight and fifteen years, flew off to Sea Lion Island on the 10th December for the weekend accompanied by two adults, Liz Pointing and Eileen Davies.

On arrival at the Lodge the Group was treated to a short talk on birds by author Robin Woods before setting off on a walk to observe the wildlife armed with notepads and pencils. Between them the children managed to find a total of forty five different species of birds, plants and insects. The highlights of which were the gentoo penguin chicks, the elephant seal pups, two-banded plover chicks, a painted lady and a Queen of the Falklands Fritillary butterfly, plus, of course, the incorrigible Johnny Rooks, which followed them everywhere.

After lunch the children did a beach clean observed by the elephant seals,

While the elephant seal breeding season is coming to an end, the sea lion males are gathering at East Loafers in preparation for the arrival of the ladies. These feisty beasts provide a fascinating show of male aggression and are the lions of the ocean with their loud roars and handsome manes.

The island is full of the cries of babies, from tiny wee Rockhopper chicks on their windy cliff top, to the ever-growing gentoo chicks on their sandy bluffs. We have some 3500 adult gentoos, who are occasionally joined by a lonesome king penguin or two, here for a moult (though not of the whisky variety!).

We have also been doing a number of beach clean-ups around the island over the past few weeks. A big thank you to the members of the watch group who managed to gather a huge heap of litter for us (around 130 kilos not including a large round wooden structure!!), and also to members of the military painting party who were here in November – we really appreciate all your help!

who, apart from the occasional yawn, seemed completely oblivious to the hive of activity going on around them. By the end of the afternoon sixteen very tired children returned to the lodge for tea followed by some free time and a wildlife quiz. Despite several hours of hard physical work and exposure to the sun and wind, it still took a considerable amount of persuasion from Eileen and Liz for the children to go to sleep!

On Sunday the children awoke to another glorious day. After breakfast and a general tidy up, the intrepid explorers undertook a treasure hunt around the Lodge. It was a wonder that there was any treasure left to find as an inquisitive Johnny Rook had his eye very firmly glued on the booty! The children then demonstrated their artistic talents as they drew some pictures of the wildlife they had observed the previous day. This was followed by another walk and a game of football. Then, sadly it was time to return home.

We wish everybody a great start to 2006, and look forward to welcoming lots of new and familiar faces on the island in this new year!



Above: elephant seals

Below: rockhopper penguin and chick



The Watch Group would like to say a huge thank you to Rob, Angela, Morag, Lyndsey and all the other staff at the Lodge for their wonderful hospitality. A marvellous time was had by all. Eileen Davies.



Photo Eileen Davies



Photo Eileen Davies

White-chinned Petrel Survey on Kidney and Cochon Islands

Our team of dedicated scientists visited these two pristine islands between the 9th and 11th of January. The mission was to establish how many White-chinned petrel breed on the two islands. Two methods were employed to accomplish this. The first was employed during the day and consisted of checking every suitable burrow where the birds are known to breed. Once a burrow was located, the display call of the birds was played back at the entrance. If the burrow was occupied the bird inside would call back to warn-off any potential intruder. The second method was used at dusk when the birds returned to land. At this time of the year, only one bird stays at the nest whilst the second parent is at sea feeding. They swap over at night to avoid daytime predators like skuas. Two areas of burrows were found on Kidney and a total of up to 40 nests are believed to be occupied this season.

Kidney Island is a very special place for

two reasons. First it is devoid of introduced predators like rats and mice and has plenty of local birds like tussacbirds and Cobb's wren and many burrowing petrels. The two most important are sooty shearwaters and the White-chinned petrel. The second reason is only apparent at dusk time when thousands of sooty shearwaters come to check their burrows and feed their chicks. The island is almost totally covered with their burrows and walking at night needs special care as shearwaters drop from the sky and run on the ground to their nests. If one is in the way of a landing bird, collision is almost unavoidable.

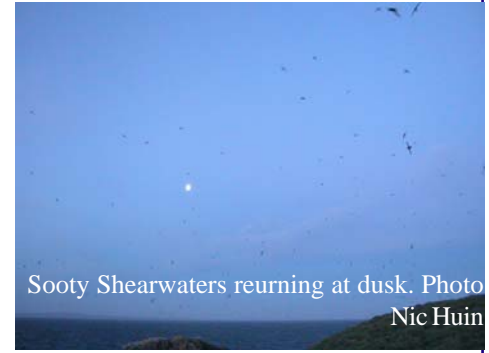
Although not as numerous as shearwaters here, white-chinned petrels are important to study as they are globally threatened, like the albatross due to mortality associated with fisheries. The closest place they breed outside the Falkland Islands is in South Georgia, which holds the majority of the world population. Like their bigger cousins, the albatross, these petrels travel huge distances at sea in order to obtain their food. In a recent study, a bird followed from South Georgia visited the Falklands and even crossed Falkland

Sound during a two-week trip from and to its nest.

On the last day of the trip we also visited Cochon Island to check what is breeding there. We found plenty of shearwater nests, but unfortunately no White-chinned petrel. This means that this species has so far only been found breeding on three islands in the Falklands. These are Kidney, New and Bottom Islands (in Port William). Nic Huin



White-chinned petrels. Photo Nic Huin



Sooty Shearwaters returning at dusk. Photo Nic Huin

Potential IBA Survey by John Cromarty

This is my fifth visit to the Falkland Islands and my third working for Falklands Conservation. I have previously worked as field assistant on the Falkland Island Seabird Monitoring Programme (FISMP) and as warden on the king penguin colony at Volunteer Point. In the UK I have just completed 3 years contracted work on lapwing for Conservation Science Department, RSPB and will be surveying black and red-throated divers in the Outer Hebrides (again for Conservation Science Department, RSPB) upon my return.

Out here I will be surveying some key sites that have been identified as potential Important Bird Areas (IBAs) as classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Highlighting the listed species that breed in the Falkland Islands and their IUCN classification shows the importance of the IBAs.

Endangered: black-browed albatross.

Vulnerable: rockhopper penguin, macaroni penguin, southern giant petrel, white-chinned petrel and Cobb's wren.

Near Threatened: gentoo penguin, magellanic penguin, sooty shearwater and striated caracara.

The potential IBAs I have covered so far (in conjunction with broad habitat classifications) include The Narrows, East Bay and Lake Sullivan on the West and Cape Dolphin on the East.

Whilst in these and other areas I will be adding to the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) currently being undertaken by enthusiastic volunteers throughout the islands. Although I enjoy observing all birds, the species of particular note in the Falkland Islands for me (along with the IUCN listed) are the endemics and the races/subspecies.

Endemic species: Cobb's wren and Falkland steamer duck

Races/subspecies: white-tufted grebe, common diving-petrel, black-crowned night heron, upland goose, kelp goose, short-eared owl, blackish cinclodes, dark-

faced ground-tyrant, Falkland pipit, Falkland grass wren, Falkland thrush, black-throated finch, and, long-tailed meadowlark.

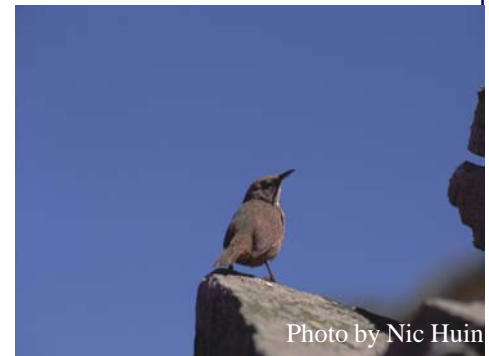
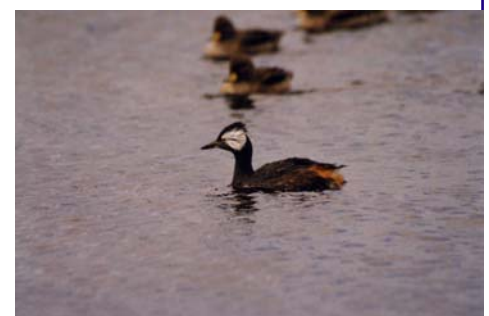


Photo by Nic Huin

Above: Cobb's wren

Below: white-tufted grebe



Goodbye.....

Well it is with an over cast shadow of sadness that I enter into the exciting world of running my own business, SeAled PR. With my final day at Falklands Conservation fast approaching it is with only fond memories that I look back at the past four years.

During my time at Conservation I have probably learnt more about my home and surroundings than in the 20 (or so!) years before it. I had a real passion and a huge sense of pride in being a Falkland Islander, but it is only now that I feel I truly understand the unique and incredibly delicate environment that surrounds me and that I have every reason to feel that passion and pride.

From organising events, dealing with accounts, bullying people into radio interviews, producing Newsletters to running the Watch Group I can definitely say I have had a fantastic time with Falklands Conservation and will miss the job terribly.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at FC for being such a great group of people, everyone who has helped me in any events that I have organised, the generosity to FC from volunteers is amazing and long may it continue. Last but not least I would like to thank all past and present Watch Group members. I will miss running the Watch

Group but know that it will be in the safehands of the new Community Conservation Officer, you are all a huge asset to FC, keep up the hard work.

*Thanks for everything
Sa'as
(Sarah Clement)*



and a final word..

Sarah has said her farewells but we cannot let her go without extending a huge thank you from everyone at Falklands Conservation. In the 4 years that Sarah has been at Falklands Conservation she has contributed an incredible amount to the organisation. Sarah's contagious enthusiasm, energy and indefatigable optimism have been the drive behind the many community events that Falklands Conservation has undertaken from beach cleans to the hugely successful Charity Ball. Rather than accept problems Sarah has always looked for new solutions and with innovative ideas and a gift for gentle cajoling they have always been found. The Watch Group has grown in numbers and the range of activities keeps everyone busy not just through the busy summer camping season but through the winter also. Whilst these may be Sarah's most visible successes she has achieved so much more, quietly and unnoticed, and has always been ready to jump into whatever space needs filled from working the till to rescuing oiled seabirds. Newsletters, leaflets and not least the bookkeeping have all fallen under her hand.

We will miss you and wish you the greatest success in your new ventures.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Falklands Conservation.



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