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# FALKLANDS CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER

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## Longlining National Plan of Action *Released for Public Comment*

To arrest the dramatic decline of many albatross and petrel species as a result of longline fishing around the world, in 1999 the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) developed an International Plan of Action for Reducing Seabird Mortality by Longline Fishing (IPOA-S). IPOA-S outlines the necessary steps for longlining countries to develop a voluntary National Plan of Action-Seabirds (NPOA-S) to reduce seabird mortality.

Late last year Dr Ben Sullivan (Seabirds at Sea Team, SAST) worked on a contract with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to write a draft NPOA-S for the Falkland Islands to review and formalise mitigation measures currently used by longliners in local waters and locally registered vessels and recommend improvements to further reduce seabird mortality levels. The current level of mortality associated with local longliners is relatively low.

However, as regular readers would know in 2001/03 SAST have identified a significant level of mortality associated with the local trawling finfish fleet. Although trawl fisheries are not specifically covered by IPOA-S, in light of SAST findings, Ben also drafted a Plan of Action for the trawling fleet to reduce the current level of mortality and formalise the future management of seabird/fishery related issues in the islands.

In November 2002, industry stakeholders attended a workshop to have input on an early draft of the two plans. The plans will be released for industry and public comment next week and a second meeting is planned



for late July to consult with industry stakeholders on the final draft. The Falkland Islands plan will be the first written for a United Kingdom Overseas Territory.



As well as providing guidelines for managing seabird mortality by the Falkland Islands fishing fleet the plan will also assist the UK to meet international conservation commitments. The Falklands are in an excellent position to be one of the few countries to complete a NPOA-S and therefore exhibit our commitment to combining sustainable fisheries management with broader conservation issues.

# Seabirds return to Ascension Island

*A number of species of seabird have returned to nest on Ascension Island, in what is thought to be the first breeding success on the mainland of this remote Atlantic island in over a hundred years.*

*Tara George & Richard White, Ascension Conservation Officers*

Like many other islands, Ascension has suffered from invasive mammalian predators - in its case, the introduction of feral cats in 1815. Prior to this the Island was home to massive colonies of boobies, frigatebirds, storm-petrels and tropicbirds. Although the guano-covered rocks remain, the breeding birds have long since disappeared - instead having to nest on nearby predator-free offshore stacks and rocky islets.

In February 2002, a feral cat eradication programme was started which aimed to help restore the Island's devastated seabird colonies. Although not yet fully complete, positive results are starting to be seen and around 750 feral cats have already been removed by a special

ist team from New Zealand. The team is still locating the remaining cats and hopes to have removed them all by April 2003.

To date, three species of seabird have successfully moved to accessible sites on the mainland. Seven pairs of Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* have raised two chicks, and this positive example has also been followed by White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* and Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*. With the continuing removal of feral cats, it is hoped that many more seabirds will return to nest among the Island's old lava flows in years to come - including globally threatened species such as the Ascen

sion Frigatebird *Fregata aquila* (Vulnerable), which is currently confined to one tiny islet just off the coast of the main island.



Norman Ratcliffe

**The entire world population of Ascension Frigatebird currently nests on one tiny islet 250m off the mainland of Ascension Island**

Article and photos from BirdLife website [www.birdlife.org.uk](http://www.birdlife.org.uk)

## The John Muir Award

John Muir was born in 1838 and died in 1914 and was the founder of much of the modern world conservation movement. Born in Scotland he developed an early awareness of the value of wildlife and the environment. He emigrated to Wisconsin in the American mid-west and at the age of 30 he achieved fame as a botanist, geologist and glaciologist. During his explorations of Alaska and the high Sierra he became aware of the threats to such wild places and led the campaign for the protection of Yosemite and influenced Presidents Roosevelt and Wilson in designating over 50 areas and 200 national American monuments.

The John Muir award was set up in 1997 by the John Muir Trust, which was formed in Scotland to protect and conserve wild places. The aims of this award are to encourage people of all ages to discover, enjoy and conserve the planet's wild places; this is done through a structured scheme, which is easily adaptable for the Falkland Islands.

The John Muir Award was established to:

**Promote** educational, social and personal development, through the exploration of wild places and involvement in conservation.

**Encourage** an environmental agenda within youth organisations, and a youth work agenda within environmental organisations.

**Ensure** that social circumstances don't exclude people from opportunities to experience wild places.

The Award is split into four challenges **Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share**. The aims of the Award are closely linked to those of Falklands Conservation and that is why we have taken the opportunity to develop this Award within the Islands, alongside the schools and the military population at MPA. Groups, families or individuals can work towards the Award. To participate, simply think about an area or part of the Falklands, which inspires you, discover it, explore it, help to conserve it and share it!

If you would like more information or would like to take part in the John Muir Award please call Falklands Conservation on 22247 or you can log on to [www.johnmuiraward.org](http://www.johnmuiraward.org) if you are based in UK and would like answers to some more specific questions email [info@johnmuiraward.org](mailto:info@johnmuiraward.org). The award can also be done as a family, so why not give it a go.

# Seabird bycatch addressed by Taiwan

*Significant steps have been taken by the Taiwanese Government to address the seabird bycatch from legally operated Taiwanese owned vessels.*

The Taiwanese Government is to set up a scientific observer programme for Taiwanese longline fishing vessels. The observers are to monitor levels of seabird bycatch, and will be deployed in the Southern Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans. Before going to sea, the observers are given a training course on threats and the status of seabirds such as albatrosses and petrels. In addition to the course for the observers, the government has set up training courses on seabird bycatch mitigation measures for the officers of longline vessels.

Taiwan is currently preparing a National Plan of Action (NPOA) for reducing seabird bycatch by their vessels (similar to the one being prepared for the Falkland Islands). All Taiwanese vessels are fishing south of 30°S are required to use bird scaring lines and to set lines only at night. Since 1996 the Fisheries Administration and the Tuna Boat-owners Association have supplied a number of bird scaring lines to vessels, and assisted them to install automatic bait casting machines. An educational book, *Catch Fish not Birds* has been published in Mandarin.

More than 500 Taiwanese-owned longline vessels operate legally world-wide targeting various species of tuna. A further 169 Taiwanese-owned vessels operate under Flags of Convenience. Many of these operate in waters south of 30°S where large numbers of seabirds are killed attempting to take bait off hooks during line setting. Many Black-browed Albatross from the Falkland Islands move north into waters where they are killed by longliners fishing for tuna.

Taiwan and Japan are collaborating on an Action Plan to deter Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing vessels operating under Flags of Convenience. These are thought to kill large numbers of seabirds, and not to make any attempts at preventing this mortality. The Action Plan operates under a 'white list' basis whereby legally operating vessels are recognised by both countries so that their fish landings can be controlled. This is thought to be better than making a 'black list', as vessels can easily change their names.

*Information gathered from World Birdwatch Volume 25 March 2003, Richard Thomas/Birdlife. Compiled by Tim Reid, Seabirds at Sea Team.*



*Picture by Graham Robertson*

## New Colony of Black-browed Albatross

In the recent edition of World Birdwatch (volume 25 no 1) an article told how a new colony of Black-browed Albatross have been discovered on an Island just off Evangelistas at the Pacific entrance to the Straits of Magellan, Chile. In an aerial survey of the Island at least 3,000 Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* were estimated to be there. This is good news for figures of the endangered species. The Falkland Islands is home to the largest colony of Black-browed Albatross in the world.

Picture by Chris Weissenborn



## Tagged Elephant Seal turns up on

### North East Island

On the 23rd of February 2003 Euan Dunn and Robin Woods were traversing the southern coast of the southern part of North East Island and came across a tagged sub-adult Elephant Seal, on a closer and very careful inspection they discovered the tag had a number. Robin then got hold of Mr Galimberti the scientist in charge of Elephant seal research on Sea Lion Island. Mr Galimberti said that it was a very strong possibility that this was a five and a half year old seal that had been tagged on Sea Lion Island in 1996 as a moulting immigrant. He was in place with two females for company on North East.

## Falklands Conservation

### 'Adopt-a-Penguin'

Available from the UK and Stanley office

*Tired of trying to find that original present? Want something special to send to family or friends? Then look no further! Falklands Conservation has for sale Adopt a Penguin packs. These make fantastic presents and give you the opportunity to help support the Falkland Islands Wildlife.*



The pack consists of a certificate (pictured left), a report outlining Volunteer Point and its wildlife, King penguin pin, card framed photo of your adopted penguin and a Volunteer Point Newsletter with half yearly updates sent out. All funds raised by this go back into the Volunteer Point Project. Falklands Conservation have supported this site with volunteer wardens who are there to help protect the birds from disturbance, inform the tourists and carry out penguin and chick counts which help monitor the breeding rates on the site. Over 1,400 people visited Volunteer Point this season, help us keep them informed.

#### FALKLANDS CONSERVATION

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A full list of Trustees is available from our offices  
The Newsletter is edited by Sarah Clement & Becky Ingham  
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