

Falklands Conservation



Newsletter

Falklands Conservation, PO Box 26, Jetty Visitor Centre, Stanley, FIQQ 1ZZ

Telephone: (00500) 22247 Fax: (00500) 22288

www.falklandsconservation.com

Email: grant.munro@conservation.org.fk

Environmental assessment following Holberg wrecking

On the 5th of November 2006 the Uruguayan scallop trawler the Holberg ran aground in Port Purvis. The vessel had only left Stanley on the 1st November and was carrying around 200 tonnes of marine fuel. It emerged very quickly that the vessel was leaking low quantities of marine gas oil (diesel fuel) and an oil slick over 1 mile long was evident. A team from Falklands Conservation headed to the site 5 days after the wrecking to assess the environmental impact.

Port Purvis is an enclosed area of water situated in the north of the West Islands, its coast is low lying beach, pebble and rock. It is accessible from the narrows to the Pebble Sound and is subject to strong tidal currents, at its deepest it is around 22m and was chartered last in 1844. The Holberg was dredging for scallops in the shallows (around 12m) when it got in to difficulty and is now lying on her port side about 100m from the southern shore.



The southern coast-line opposite the wreck and stretching about 2 miles east is the worst affected shoreline, with a strong smell of diesel in the air and oil evident on the shore and inshore waters.



This light refined diesel has a low-specific gravity content, has a low viscosity and is quick to evaporate. With this in mind the oil is fortunately degrading quite rapidly on the water and much of it will not reach any coastline. The tidal currents of the port are also helping to break down the oil slick and weather conditions will help fragment and evaporate it further. In the localised stretch where oil is reaching the shoreline (blown by the predominant north-westerly wind during the first week) there is a varying degree of oil pollution. At the worst areas (directly opposite the vessel) inter-tidal vertebrates such as sandhoppers and marine isopods have died as a result. Further from the wreck (1 mile east) although there is evidence of oil, a large degree of invertebrate fauna is alive. Invertebrates will have a varying degree of tolerance to oil and

toxins, and are a good indicator to the extent of oil pollution. The immediate sub-littoral fauna such as fish eggs and larvae are also sensitive to oil at low concentrations, but cannot be assessed from the shore.



Port Purvis has an abundant and diverse birdlife, including seabirds, waterfowls and waders. There are two gentoo penguin colonies on the southern shore and one imperial shag colony, amongst other species such as kelp geese, upland geese, steamer ducks, and oyster catchers, that forage on the coastline and on the water. Risks to birds becoming oiled depends on where they forage, for example diving birds such as grebes and penguins spend most their time in the water and on the surface, and are more at risk. At this time of year birds are on their nests, and for species such as the penguins the port will be used extensively whilst on their foraging trips. The

Continued on page 2

shorelines around the penguin colonies are clear of oil and their colonies were inspected during the site visit. Birdlife around the coastline and at the colonies showed no immediate signs of detrimental effects caused by the oil.

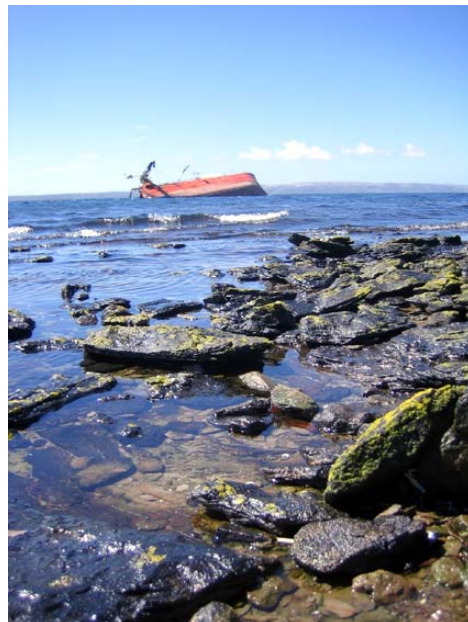


The port has no breeding sites of seals, although the waters may be used occasionally by seals and cetaceans for foraging. Marine mammals are thought to actively avoid strong concentrations of oil on the water surface and the Holberg wreck poses minimal risk to these

animals.

Once the leak is contained the oil will degrade by natural processes such as evaporation relatively quickly and the affected shoreline will slowly clear of oil. In the long term the larger ecosystem will be able to absorb the low quantities of oil leaked and there should be no serious lasting effects. Of course the sooner the leak is addressed the faster the ecosystem can recover. The situation will need to be closely monitored, especially if salvaging operations commence and when attempts to remove the remaining fuel on board occurs, to ensure no further oil escapes to the environment.

S.Crofts



Falklands Conservation 2006 Annual General Meeting

Our AGM was held in London this year, as we alternate the venue with Stanley to give an opportunity for members both in UK and the Falklands to attend at least every other year. This is where the charity's activities are reported and its governing body elected. Henry Robinson, Chairman of FC in the UK, was in charge of proceedings and started off by thanking the two Trustees who were retiring: Dr Ron Lewis-Smith, a botanist who worked for BAS for many years and will be continuing to help on our Scientific Advisory Group, and Gordon Liddle who is stepping down after six years and as Chairman in the Islands since 2004. Gordon has been a stalwart and active supporter during his term of office, and will be very much missed. Three existing Trustees were then re-appointed: Professor John Croxall, Julian Fitter and Tim Carr (all UK based). New Trustees Debbie Summers(FI), Alan Henry (FI) and Dr Mike Richardson (UK) were then elected. A brief report was given on our 2005-06 achievements followed

by Bill Featherstone, Treasurer, presenting the audited accounts, which showed a satisfactory outcome with a small surplus. Our auditors, Wilkins Kennedy, were then re-appointed.



- Bill Featherstone presenting the accounts to the members.

The formal agenda over, members enjoyed a presentation by John Croxall on saving albatrosses in the UK Overseas Territories, following on from our successful international workshop in March. Andrew Wakeham-Dawson (previously RAF Chaplain at MPA) gave a fascinating talk on his work with moths and butterflies. Due to some last minute changes due to problems with equip-

ment, there were three refreshment breaks! These in fact proved to be a popular move ensuring the wine was consumed and extended time provided for long standing supporters to meet again and new members to get to know old hands and Trustees. A. Brown



- John Howard from Wilkins Kennedy with Bill Featherstone, Treasurer.



- Andrew Wakeham Dawson and John Croxall.

Year 12 Camping Trip by Karen Minto

As part of the 6th form LEAP programme, Julian Cooke approached Falklands Conservation to ask if we could undertake a week long community conservation project. Grant Munro and Ali Liddle obliged and on Friday 6th October, Ali came into FICS to give a presentation on tussac grass regeneration, and its importance to the wildlife and environment of the Falkland Islands. On the following Monday, we all went to Cape Pembroke to go and collect our tussac tillers. Having observed our risk assessment, and checked that no Sea Lions were present, we set off in pairs and managed to collect 17 sacks of tussac. A few of us were amazed at how much we had collected, while others were concerned about the seal poo that some had slid on, and in one case, dragged through, and they were not very impressed!

Tuesday: At 9am, after everything was packed, we set off for camp... in the rain. This was not a good start to the camp, and most of us were not very happy. Some students went with Ali in the Conservation Rover and had to put up with the smell of the seal poo; whilst the rest of the poor bunch, had to put up with Julian, in the blue minibus. Zoran Zuvic, who volunteered his time to be with us, set off in Julian's rover with all the tents and sleeping bags.

By the time we got to camp, and set up our tents, the sun had come out, which really did brighten up our day. We met with Ben Bernsten and had a briefing of what activities would be happening that week. We got to test out our Trangia stoves, and walk up around the hills of the settlement, and decided to play a game (most of us are now 16yrs old-but we couldn't resist!). Zoran acted as a sniper on top of a dune, and we all hid within the grass and behind the dunes. After we had hidden, Zoran tried to spot us and sent Julian to where he thought we were hiding. Shameful to say, we were all caught!

None of us got a good night sleep as we were so cold, and certain young man named Karl, decided to snore through the night, to which I can say, he was not

a very popular person in the morning! Wednesday: We prepared for the main activity of the trip; tussac planting. We drove to the Russell Smith area, where the conservation group had planted tussac, both the previous, and this year. So after spending about an hour and a half planting tussac, every member of the group finished with a strange but real warm glow in the heart, proud of what they had achieved.



After cleaning up we observed the wildlife at Sea Lion Cove while eating our lunch. Julian scared off a male sea lion so we drove off without him; leaving him running behind us. We collected pebbles whilst beach cleaning and also helped Ben collect wire that could endanger the Magellanic penguins nesting nearby.

That evening we ate, danced to country music (which most of the students enjoyed), cleaned up and went to bed. Wednesday was the highlight of everybody's trip.

Thursday: We cleaned a pond close to the settlement, which took about 3 hrs to do. Some surprising items were found, such as a peat stove, hypodermic needles wrapped in canvas, very old sheep guts in drums, and to top it off, a pair of old knickers - it wasn't nice, but we got the job done. Looking at the before and after photos, it was shocking to see how much had actually been cleared up.



We walked to the beach after lunch, passing some wild horses and a lone King penguin on the way. When

we reached the beach I think that some of us thought that we had cleaned the wrong place, as there was a lot of rubbish upon the grass.

When we arrived back at the settlement, we packed the two huge FIDF tents that we had been using to shelter in, and then were invited inside the house. We were offered to stay the night in the house, and all the students wanted to, but one certain Julian thought it would be better for us to sleep in our tents... in the rain. So off it was to bed after another excellent evening of good company and entertainment.



Friday: We packed up, thanked all the adults for organising and coming along on the trip, and then set off back to town. I'm not sure about the men, I can say on behalf of all the girls; we were dying to have a nice hot shower.

Back at FICS we cleaned all the Trangias, and put away the waterproofs, kindly given to us by JSATC Hillside, and then went up to FIDF to put away the tents. Eventually, exhausted, but happy, we were allowed to go home.

Overall, it was a really good camping trip. I can say that I'm really glad I went because when I came back, I felt that I had really achieved something to benefit the community and the conservation of the Falkland Islands. I believe that all my friends felt the same.

Year 12 would like to thank; Julian Cooke and Ali Liddle for organising an excellent week, Ben and Lucas Bernsten for letting us stay at Elephant Beach Farm and for the use of their garden as a camp site, Zoran Zuvic for coming along, Nikki Buxton for allowing him the time off from work at Synergy Information Systems, Hillside Camp, FIDF, and Stanley House for the loan of equipment, and to Karl, for making Thursday an emotional evening for Ben (you'll just have to ask).

Introducing FC's newest team member - Isaac Forster

Whilst this is but the third day in the office for myself, I have already been Shanghai-ed into producing a short introduction for the newsletter, so any thoughts I entertained of an anonymous entrance have quickly been scuppered. Three years ago I passed through the Falklands briefly, on my way to Bird Island, South Georgia working for the British Antarctic Survey on their Albatross monitoring programme. I confess after this initial visit I thought it most unlikely that I would end up spending any significant amount of time here (despite thoroughly enjoying the pleasures of Monday night karaoke at the Globe, early morning 2003 rugby world cup watching at Deano's and the obligatory pint or 10 at the Victory!) however after falling completely in love with the Southern Atlantic wildlife, when the opportunity arose to take on the position of Albatross and Petrel Programme co-

ordinator for the organisation there was little hesitation in saying a firm yes to the post. Prior to the 2.5 years I spent on Bird Island, I completed an honours degree in Conservation Biology at the University of Melbourne, Australia, working on a remote conservation project in Madagascar. With other work experience including field sites in Arizona, and far northern Queensland, I have an obvious attraction to off the beaten track locations, so the Falklands fits the bill very nicely. And yes, I'd better confess here that I am a native Antipodean, and although this is an obvious shortcoming the fair Falklanders have been fantastically supportive and friendly for my arrival. However I do expect that the ensuing ribbing, not to mention rabid barracking during the upcoming Ashes series will even up the ledger!

In the short time I have been at the desk

I can see that there are some big shoes that Oli Yates has left behind to fill, the range and scope of the projects planned, are already in the pipeline, or have been completed are intimidating in their impressiveness. However I look forward to the challenges ahead in taking forward one of the most successful seabird mortality mitigation programmes around the globe, and further promoting F.C. as leaders in seabird conservation issues.



Our newest team member, Isaac, is the one on the right....just in case you weren't sure!!

Rare Birds in The Falklands Pebble Island Scores Big Again



Photo A White

On the evening of the 22nd October, Allan White saw a swallow flying around the gardens of the lodge. Its identity was later confirmed as a Blue & White Swallow, *Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*, through some great photographs. It was last seen around the 24th October.



Photo A Henry

Mid October saw the Erect Crested penguin, *Eudyptes sclateri*, return to the Rock-hopper penguin, *Eudyptes chrysocome*, colony at Marble. This bird has been returning every year since it was first seen in January 1997.



Photo A White

On the 24th October Arina Berntsen found another very rare Falkland Islands vagrant in the form of a Fork Tailed Flycatcher, *Tyrannus savana*. Again Allan White managed to get some great photos of it in the lodge garden. It was still present in the area until, at least, the 30th October.

If you see a rare or unusual bird please contact Alan Henry ASAP on Tel 21637 or 55637

FALKLANDS CONSERVATION

Chief Executive Officer: Grant Munro

Science Officer: Nic Huin

Administrative Officer: Anna Shepherd

UK Executive Officer: Ann Brown

FI Secretary: Hay Miller

Albatross and Petrel Programme: Isaac Forster, Sarah Crofts

Trustees: Gordon Liddle (FI Chairman),

Keith Biles (FI Treasurer), Henry Robinson (UK Chairman),

Bill Featherstone (UK Treasurer)

A full list of Trustees is available from our offices

The Newsletter is edited by Anna Shepherd

Company Number 3661322

Charity Number 1073859

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



The Newsletter
is partially
sponsored by

CABLE & WIRELESS
FALKLAND ISLANDS