

Kidney Island Group

Ref number	FK09
Admin Region	Falkland Islands
Co-ordinates	51°37'S, 57°46'W
Area	Kidney Island (32 ha), Cochon Island (8 ha)
Altitude	0–30 m
IBA categories	A1, A2, A4ii, A4iii
Status	National Nature Reserves (designated 1964) Owned by Falkland Islands Government.

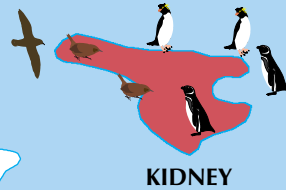
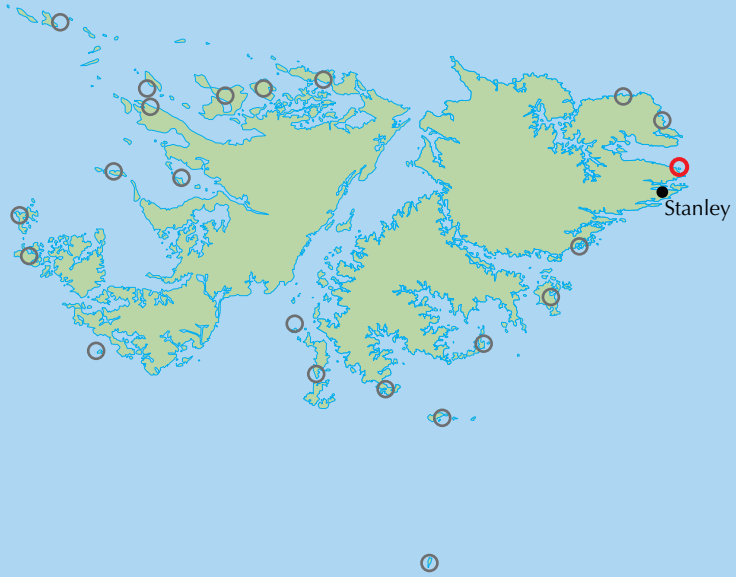
Site description

Kidney Island is roughly kidney-shaped, as its name suggests, and lies about 0.5 km off the coast of East Falkland, at the southern entrance to Berkeley Sound. It is largely low-lying, with the highest point at 18m above sea level, and it is almost entirely covered with mature Tussac. There are boulder beaches on eastern and western coasts, a large sand bay facing south-west and near-vertical cliffs along much of the northern coastline.

Cochon Island is a small island lying adjacent to Kidney Island, formed from steeply dipping rocks, which rise to over 30m at the island's highest point. The soil is generally thin and vegetation is limited to Tussac, Wild Celery and Stonecrop, which vary in density throughout the rocky ridges.



FK09 Kidney Island Group



FK09	Kidney Island Group	Breeding (pairs)	Notes
Criteria	Key species		
A1	White-chinned Petrel <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	1,000 (approx)	Kidney population, mainly along southern coastal slopes
A1	Rockhopper Penguin <i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>	521	Kidney (257) increasing slowly, but large decline since 1930s (approx 3,500 pairs, Dec 1936), Cochon (264) decrease from 515 in 1995/96
A1	Magellanic Penguin <i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>		Numerous Kidney, not counted
A1, A4ii	Sooty Shearwater <i>Puffinus griseus</i>	>100,000	Kidney population has increased since 1960s, burrows on coastal slopes and inland, perhaps to density of one pair per 2 sq m
A1, A2	Cobb's Wren <i>Troglodytes cobbi</i>		Widespread and numerous Kidney, not counted
A2	Tussacbird/Blackish Cinclodes <i>Cinclodes antarcticus</i>		Numerous on Kidney beaches and seen across island, not counted
A2	Falkland Steamer Duck <i>Tachyeres brachypterus</i>	15	Fluctuates: 1936 (6 prs), 1960 (10 prs), 1969 (8 prs)
A4iii	Combined seabirds	>102,000	

Birds

See table above for details of key species.

At least 34 species have been recorded breeding on Kidney Island since 1960. The most numerous is the Sooty Shearwater, which was apparently confined to the western headland and steep north-western slopes in the 1930s, but now burrows around the coast and well inland. Kidney Island has one of only three known Falkland breeding colonies of White-chinned Petrels. It is also the only definite breeding site for Great Shearwater outside the Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island group in the South Atlantic. Grey-backed Storm-petrels breed, but are very difficult to count. Common Diving Petrels traditionally bred but have not been found nesting in recent years.

One or two pairs of Macaroni Penguins regularly breed with the Rockhoppers on Kidney, and small numbers of Rock Shag and Imperial Shag are present, but populations have not been counted recently. Canary-winged/Black-throated Finches formerly bred on Kidney but are now rarely seen and one or two pairs of Ruddy-headed Geese have bred there since 1983. These small numbers, however, do not qualify the site. Other endemic subspecies recorded are Black-crowned Night-heron, Upland Goose, Short-eared Owl, Dark-faced Ground-tyrant, Falkland Pipit, Falkland Grass Wren, Falkland Thrush and Long-tailed Meadowlark.

Other species of interest

Both islands are used by Southern Sea Lions for hauling out, and they can often be found resting in Tussac, sometimes well inland and at the top of long slopes, but apparently they do not now breed there. At least 26 species of flowering plants have been recorded in recent years on Kidney Island, including the two endemic ragworts, Woolly Falkland Ragwort *Senecio littoralis* and Smooth Falkland Ragwort *Senecio vaginatus*. The Swordgrass (sedge) *Carex trifida* grows well with shorter Tussac. Preliminary collections and surveys of the invertebrate fauna and flora have been made because Kidney is an accessible, mature Tussac island.

Conservation issues

Kidney Island has not been grazed, but the Tussac was cut in large quantities for use as fodder for horses and cattle in Stanley until the early 1950s. Some Tussac on the eastern half of the island was accidentally burnt over in the 1940s. It is not known whether Cochon Island has ever been stocked and there is no evidence of it having been burnt.

The islands are free of introduced predators, but being at the entrance of Berkeley Sound where many fishing vessels come for transshipping and a safe anchorage, the risks of accidental oil spills or the introduction of alien species to the islands are high.

Kidney Island has a high potential value for guided day tours as it can be reached in half an hour from Stanley. However, the Tussac is very dense (sometimes overhanging dangerous cliffs) requiring physical fitness, determination and caution from visitors crossing the island. Near the southern landing bay a small wooden Tussac cutters' hut is now used occasionally by researchers. Permission to visit Kidney Island must be obtained from the Government Environmental Planning Department. It is essential that all visitors follow the Falkland Islands Countryside Code (see Appendix 1) particularly to guard against the risk of fire. A management plan is being drafted by Falklands Conservation in close consultation with the Environment Committee which will address the management issues for this group of islands.

References

Roberts (1937), Woods (1970a, 1970b and unpublished notes 1958–2002).