

# CARCASS ISLAND

A beautiful rodent-free island with exceptional bird life



BirdLife  
**IBA**  
IMPORTANT  
BIRD AREA



[www.falklandsconservation.com](http://www.falklandsconservation.com)

# CARCASS ISLAND



The Falkland Islands archipelago lies 350km (280miles) to the east of the South American continent. It consists of two large islands, East and West Falkland, and more than 750 small islands and islets.



**Carcass Island** lies to the north-west of the Falkland Islands archipelago, 6.5 km (4 miles) off Hope Point, the nearest land on West Falkland.

Carcass Island is reached by an hour's flight from Stanley or Mount Pleasant Complex with the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS), or by Zodiac beach landings from visiting cruise ships.

The Twins, two island nature reserves owned by Falklands Conservation, lie off the north-west tip of Carcass Island. They support a population of southern sea lions and southern elephant seals.

## Contact

Tel: +500 41106

Email: [lorraine@horizon.co.fk](mailto:lorraine@horizon.co.fk)



Upland goose

# About Carcass Island

Carcass Island is about 10 km (6¼ miles) long, with a maximum width of 2.5 km (1½ miles) and covers 1,894 ha (4,680 acres). It takes its name from HMS Carcass which visited in the late 18th century.

There are large sand bays, a tidal rock point to the north-west and cliffs and slopes along the north-eastern coast. There are several freshwater ponds which are important for wildfowl.

The highest point is Mount Byng (213 m, 700 ft). It has been a sheep farm for more than a century but careful management has retained a place rich in wildlife with songbirds, penguins, and a diverse plant life that includes areas of mature tussac grass.

Charles Hansen, a Dane, was the first farmer to lease the land, setting up a sheep farm in 1872, building the settlement and fencing off livestock areas. Large areas were planted with tussac for use as winter animal feed. He passed the farm to his son Jason Hansen, and then ownership passed to Cecil and Kitty Bertrand, originally in partnership with others

and then on their own. They continued to farm the land whilst protecting its wildlife.

Rob and Lorraine McGill have owned the island since 1974. The Island is self-sufficient in organic vegetables, meat and dairy produce. Although Carcass still supports sheep, tourism is now the main focus.

One hundred and seven different plants have been identified including the uncommon **yellow orchid**, the rare endemic **hairy daisy** and **whitlowgrass**.

There are no cats, rats or mice here to predate on ground-nesting birds, which thrive here in abundance. Carcass Island is notable as an important site for the endemic **Cobb's wren**. There are several colonies of **gentoo penguins**, a good number of the rare **striated caracara** and considerable numbers of **ruddy-headed geese**.

It qualifies as an Important Bird Area (part of FK17), a global standard set by BirdLife International.





# CARCASS ISLAND

## LAMBING SEASON

The lambing season is from **October to December**. During this time visitors are asked to take extra care not to disturb ewes as they may abandon lambs if startled.

## Please follow the guidelines

MAINTAIN A DISTANCE OF **6m (20ft)** between you and any wildlife at all times.

WILDLIFE HAVE RIGHT OF WAY AT ALL TIMES. Do not block wildlife from returning or entering the sea.

TAKE CARE on steep slopes and slippery rocks.

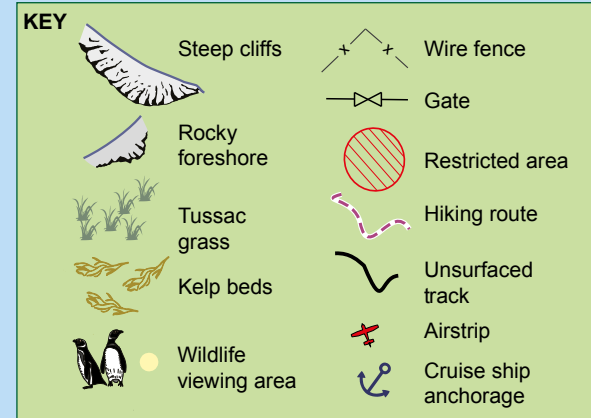
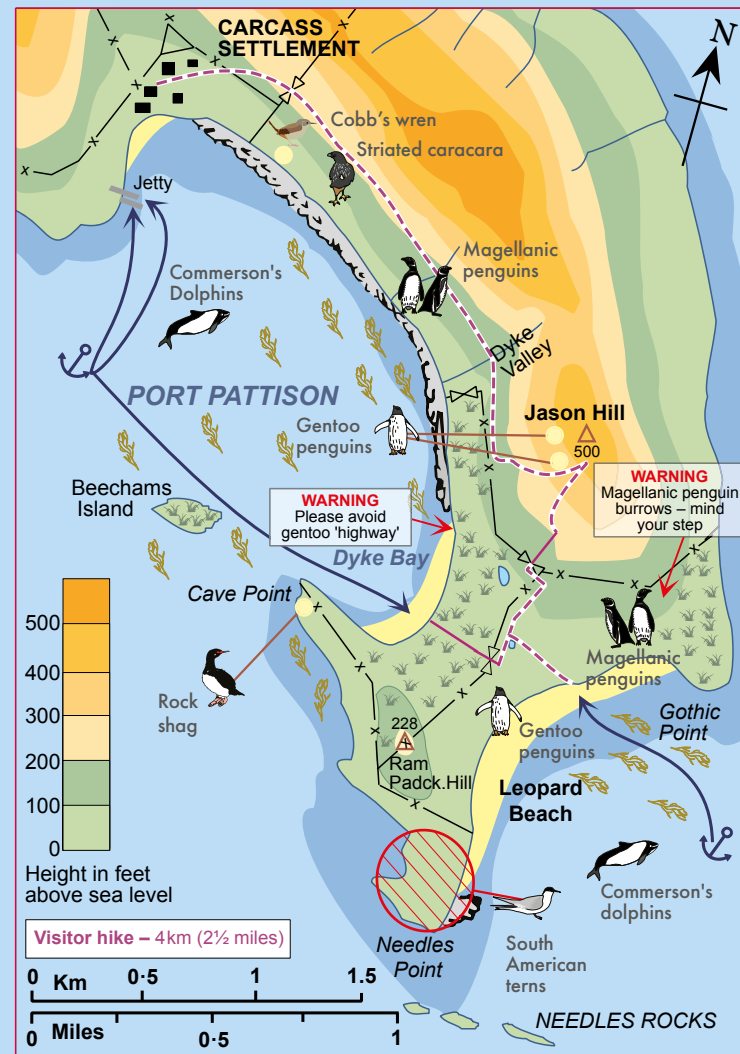
LEAVE GATES as you find them.

BE AWARE of biosecurity. Do not introduce invasive species to the area.

BE CAREFUL not to trample the burrows of nesting seabirds, particularly those of Magellanic penguins. Avoid walking across areas of high burrow density.



See enlargement for more detail



# Falkland Songbirds

Carcass Island abounds with native Falkland songbirds.

**Tussacbird, dark-faced ground tyrant, correndera pipit, sedge wren, austral thrush and long-tailed meadowlark** are all widespread and numerous.

It is also home to **Cobb's wren**, one of two endemic birds found in the Falkland Islands. Tussac grass, along with trees and shrubs planted around the settlement, provides shelter from the strong winds, a range of nest sites, abundant nest material and a plentiful source of insects for food. There are no mammal predators here so ground-nesting birds can thrive, particularly in the absence of rats and mice.

Cobb's wren was first described 100 years ago from a specimen found on Carcass Island. It was named after Arthur Cobb, a local farmer and amateur ornithologist. This is a small brown bird with a long bill. It is uniformly dark chestnut-brown above with paler buff under parts, a grey-brown head, with wings and tail, which are barred dark and light brown. The tail is often held erect. Adults fade to dull brown above in summer. Newly fledged juveniles have a dark head and bright chestnut back.

Cobb's wrens can be found on boulder-strewn beaches with lots of accumulated dead seaweed where they feed on insects and sea lice. It also takes camel crickets in the tussac grass and feeds crickets and moth caterpillars to its nestlings. It is very tame and rather than flying away, the bird will often slip under a boulder or into tussac. They live for about six years and are thought to remain in their breeding territories all year round.



Long-tailed meadowlark



Black-chinned siskin



Falkland thrush

Cobb's wren



## Carcass Island songbirds:

All nine species of Falklands breeding passerines can be seen on Carcass Island

- Cobb's wren
- Tussacbird
- White-bridled finch
- Dark-faced ground-tyrant
- Correndera pipit
- Sedge wren
- Austral thrush
- Long-tailed meadowlark
- Black-chinned siskin

# Magellanic Penguins

Carcass Island has a large number of **Magellanic penguins**, found all over the island.

They are often referred to locally as jackass penguins because of their mournful braying call, a typical sound of the Falkland summer, which continues through much of the night. Magellanic penguins are found all around the coast of southern South America and are listed as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. The estimated population of breeding pairs in the Falkland Islands is 140,000 pairs.



Magellanic penguins come to the Falkland Islands to breed. They begin to arrive in springtime (early September). Nests are made in underground burrows up to 2 m (6 ft) deep under a tussac grass pedestal or in more open peaty ground.

Birds usually return to the same burrow in the same colony each year, but ownership of nest sites is sometimes contested. They are fiercely defended at all times – beware their hooked bill, which can inflict a nasty wound.

Two eggs are laid in October and the chicks fledge in February. By late April, after moulting, the colonies are deserted. The penguins swim north for the winter, often following shoals of anchovy and other small fish and sometimes reach the coast of Brazil. A previous study found that one bird travelled 2,661 km (1,663 miles) in 75 days. When in the Falkland Islands they can dive over 100 m to catch squid and small fish.

Magellanic penguins start breeding when about five years old. The oldest birds recorded breeding in the wild are at least 16 years old.

**Gentoo penguins** also breed on Carcass Island, with the two main colonies on Jason Hill and Leopard Beach to the south of the island. They remain here all year round. Gentoos live on a diet of lobster krill, squid and fish. The birds usually leave on foraging trips in the early morning and return in late afternoon of the same or following day.



**Magellanic penguins are shyer than other penguins and when disturbed will often slide down a slope on their breast and escape into the sea.**

**Take care not to approach too close (no nearer than 6m/20ft).**

**If you can, avoid walking through a colony.**

**Do not walk above their burrows as the weight can cause the burrow roofs to cave in exposing eggs and chicks.**

# Protecting wildlife from invasive species



The wildlife on Carcass Island survives in such abundance because over the centuries it has been kept free of rats and mice. Cobb's wren cannot exist where there are rats or mice. The introduced European gorse, with its brilliant yellow flowers in spring time, now has to be controlled around the settlement to prevent its spread and reduce the risk of fire. Because birds are ground nesting, it is crucial to all areas of wildlife importance in the Falkland Islands that invasive species are kept at bay and biosecurity measures are put in place.

To prevent the spread of invasive species and diseases, you are asked to comply with a few simple measures when travelling around the islands: make sure all of your clothing, equipment and luggage is free from soil, animal faeces, seeds, insects and rodents, and scrub your footwear before each visit to a new wildlife site or seabird colony. If you have any questions about biosecurity, or wish to report diseased wildlife, please speak to the landowners or call the Department of Agriculture 27355 / Falklands Conservation 22247 for advice.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photos: Sarah Crofts, Alan R Henry, Ali Liddle, Tim Mason.

Maps by Jeremy Smith and Robert Still.

Published by Falklands Conservation July 2016. Designed by Eye on The Ball Ltd +44 1256 478309.

Registered Office: Bridge House, 4 Borough High Street, London, SE1 9QR, UK.

Falklands Conservation is a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales No 03661322 and registered charity

No 1073859. Falklands Conservation is registered as an Overseas Company in the Falkland Islands.

Falkland Office: Jubilee Villas, Ross Road, Stanley FIQQ 1ZZ | UK Office: The Gatehouse, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL

Falklands Conservation works to conserve the wildlife of the Falkland Islands. To find out more about us and how you can support what we do, visit us at Jubilee Villas, Ross Road, Stanley or go to our website:

[www.falklandsconservation.com](http://www.falklandsconservation.com)

Information about other areas of outstanding wildlife and scenery, can be found in *A Visitor's Guide to the Falkland Islands*.





# FALKLANDS CONSERVATION

*Partnering with the local and international community to conserve the Falkland Islands' natural environment.*

Falklands Conservation rely on donations and public support to carry out our work in the Falkland Islands. If you would like to join those already supporting our work, please consider becoming a member or adopting a penguin via our website

**[www.falklandsconservation.com](http://www.falklandsconservation.com)**

Or contact [ukadmin@conservation.org.fk](mailto:ukadmin@conservation.org.fk) for more options.

For regular updates on our work, follow us online



[@FalklandsConservation](https://www.instagram.com/FalklandsConservation)



[@FI\\_Conservation](https://twitter.com/FI_Conservation)

