

SAUNDERS ISLAND

A wealth of Falkland wildlife



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BIRD AREA

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SAUNDERS 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.

Saunders Island is situated just off the north coast of West Falkland. It is about 145 km (90 miles) from Stanley.

Saunders Island is reached by an hour's flight from Stanley, or Mount Pleasant Complex, with the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS). Passengers from cruise ships arrive by Zodiac at either the North or South Beach at the Neck, depending on weather conditions.

Visitor Accommodation

Four self-catering properties all have central heating, gas cooker, fridge and all the crockery and utensils you will need for your stay. Bedding, bed linen and towels are provided.

In the Settlement:

The Main House, sleeps up to 10 in two twin, one single, one double and one triple room. There is a shower room, bathroom and toilet, plus a dining room and sitting room with radio and TV. The modernised Stone House, built in 1875, sleeps up to six people in one double and two twin rooms. There is a kitchen, utility room, toilet, a bath 'with bath and shower', a washing machine, TV, and radio and WiFi hotspot.

At the Neck

Although only 16 km (10 miles) from the Settlement, it takes about an hour by Land Rover to reach The Neck, a superb wildlife location. The Cabin here, which has 24-hour power, can sleep up to eight people (two sets of bunk beds in each

of the two bedrooms). The bathroom has a shower, sink and toilet. This accommodation is isolated, and you may not see anyone else from when you are dropped off until early on the day of your departure. A hand held radio is supplied for emergency use only.

Rookery Inn

Located 10 km (6 miles) from the Settlement, close to southern rockhopper penguin and black-browed albatross colonies, Rookery Inn is a tourist cottage that can sleep up to four people in two twin bedrooms. It has 24hr power, a bathroom with sink, toilet and shower. A hand held radio is supplied for emergency use only.

Contact

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Rookery Inn

About Saunders Island

Saunders Island (12,400 ha, 30,640 acres) is the second largest offshore island in the Falklands and is named after the 18th century British Admiral Sir Charles Saunders. In 1765 it (Port Egmont) was chosen as the first British settlement in the Falkland Islands. Today it is owned by the Pole-Evans family, who run it as a traditional farm (principally for wool) with 6,000 sheep.

It has a complex shape with dramatic scenery, being about 21 km (13 miles) from east to west and almost as wide from north-east to south-west. The highest point (457 m, 1,462 ft) is the summit of Mount Richards. There are wetlands and permanent lakes, sand dunes and steep cliffs – particularly towards the northern and western coasts. A narrow waist of sand, The Neck, leads to Mount Harston and Elephant Point.

Saunders Island has exceptional wildlife. It contains one of the most accessible **black-browed albatross** colonies in the Falkland Islands. **King, southern rockhopper, Magellanic** and **gentoo** penguins all breed here. Many waterbirds are found on the ponds, including silvery grebes. Saunders Island is internationally recognised as an Important Bird Area (FK14).

The Island is sheltered and has a slightly milder climate than elsewhere in the Falklands and as a result many native plants thrive here. It is an Important Plant Area (IPA15) with 9 of the 14 Falkland endemic plants and 6 nationally threatened species.

These include populations of the striking **silvery buttercup** and **hairy daisy**.



SAUNDERS ISLAND

Bird checklist

- King penguin
- Gentoo penguin
- Macaroni penguin
- Southern rockhopper penguin
- Magellanic penguin
- White-tufted grebe
- Silvery grebe
- Black-browed albatross
- Southern giant petrel
- Rock cormorant
- King cormorant
- Black-crowned night heron
- Black-necked swan
- Kelp goose
- Upland goose
- Ruddy-headed goose
- Flying steamer duck
- Falkland steamer duck
- Chiloë wigeon
- Speckled teal
- Crested duck
- Yellow-billed pintail
- Cinnamon teal
- Turkey vulture
- Variable hawk
- Crested caracara
- Striated caracara
- Peregrine falcon
- Magellanic oystercatcher
- Blackish oystercatcher
- Two-banded plover
- Rufous-chested dotterel
- Falkland skua
- Kelp gull
- Dolphin gull
- Brown-headed gull
- South American tern
- Tussacbird
- Dark-faced ground-tyrant
- Falkland pipit
- Falkland thrush
- Falkland grass wren
- Long-tailed meadowlark
- White-bridled finch
- Black-chinned siskin

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.



no smoking

TAKE CARE on steep slopes and slippery rocks.



no fires

LEAVE GATES as you find them.



do not litter

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.



no flash

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.



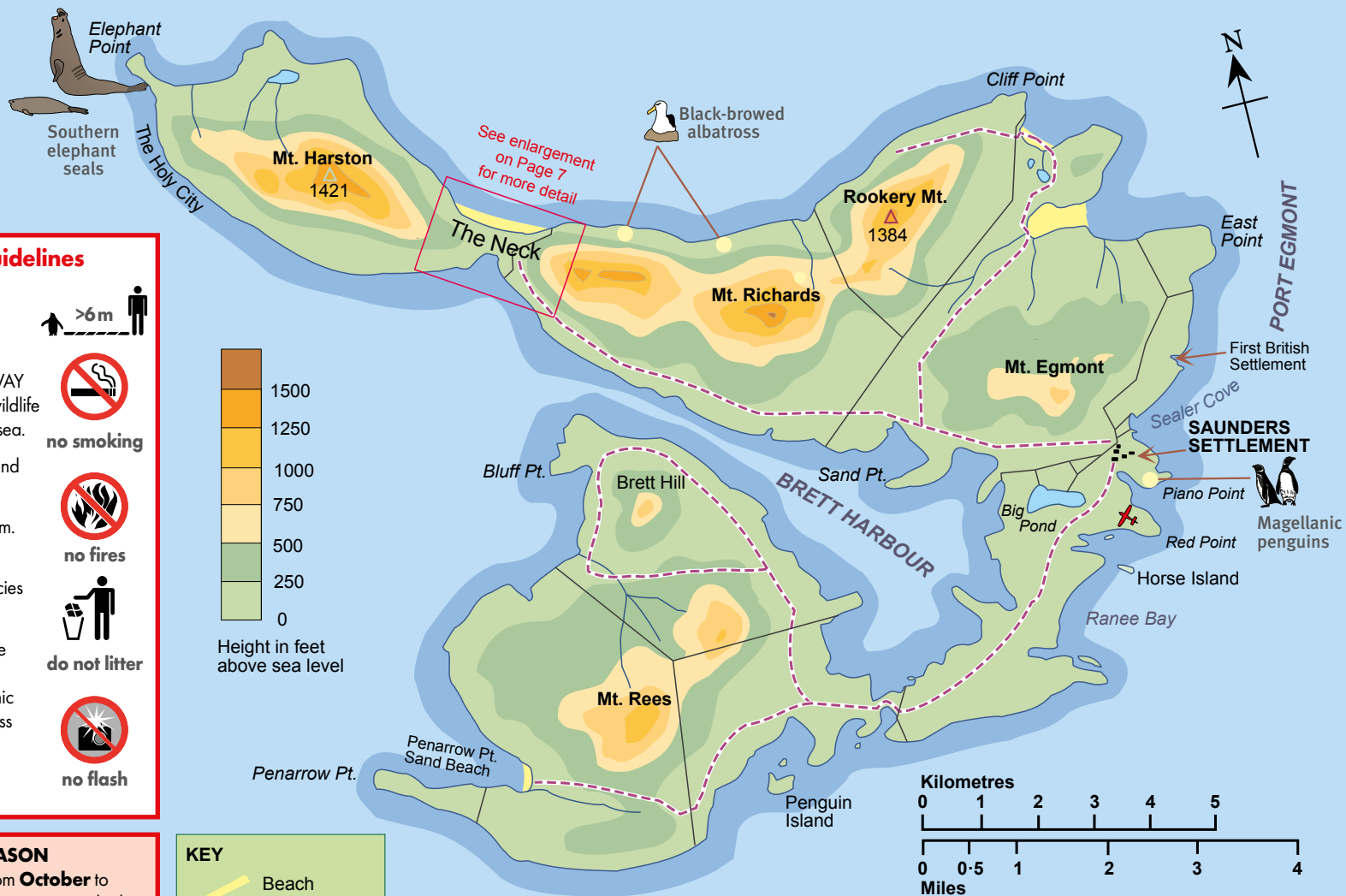
Vanilla daisy



Variable hawk



Falkland woolly ragwort



KEY

- Beach
- Wildlife viewing area
- Wire fence
- Vehicle track
- Road

The Black-browed Albatross

The largest albatross colony on Saunders Island stretches along the steep northern slopes of Mt Richards. Every spring in mid-September around 12,000 pairs of albatrosses return here to breed, with a preference for elevated sites where updrafts assist their take-off and landing.

The adults are very large; mainly white, with a blackish back and upper wings, a grey tail and a distinctive black 'eyebrow' streak over and through the eye. Their heavy, hooked pale orange bill is used to catch prey. They are magnificent birds with a 2.5 m (8 ft) wingspan that enables them to glide effortlessly over the southern seas.

Black-browed albatrosses return to the same nest in the same colony and mate for life. Their nest is a 50 cm (20") tall solid pillar made of mud and guano with some tussac grass and seaweed that has a depression in the top. A single large egg is laid in early October with incubation lasting up to 72 days.

The chicks are covered in grey down at first, is reared for about 17 weeks, until it leaves the nest in April.

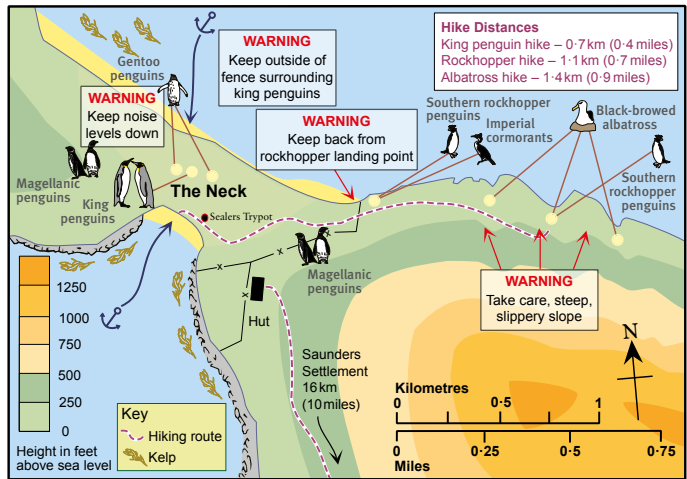
Young albatrosses head out into the southern ocean, ranging over the Patagonian Shelf and beyond in search of fish and squid. Some travel as far as the coast of southern Brazil. After fledging, it will be at least five years before the young birds return to their colony. Black-browed albatrosses are known to live up to 30 years.

Colonies of black-browed albatross exist at 12 Falkland Islands sites and make up the majority (70%) of the world population. In 2011 the black-browed albatross was re-classified from Endangered to Near Threatened as it is no longer estimated to be undergoing such a rapid population decline. However, they are still at risk from commercial fisheries where they can be caught on hooks and drowned. Although the Falkland fishery employs methods to minimise these problems, the species remains at risk across the southern ocean, where they live between April and September. They are listed under the international Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP).



Wildlife and Walks

The narrow, sandy isthmus at The Neck is crowded with **gentoo**, **Magellanic** and **king penguins**. Shorebirds here include **Magellanic** and **blackish oystercatchers**, **kelp geese** and **Falkland steamer ducks**. **Striated caracaras** roam around



in search of prey. There is a long but worthwhile walk from here to Elephant Point where there are **elephant seals** and a variety of waterfowl, including **silvery grebes**, on the small ponds. Watch out for **Commerson's** and **Peale's dolphins** near the shore and on rare occasions **fin** and **sei whales** farther out to sea. A hike to the top of Mount Harston and back to The Neck will reward you with fine views across to Carcass Island, West Point Island and, on a clear day, the Jason Islands to the north-west.

Along the northern slopes of Mount Richards (which can be approached from The Neck or the east) are nesting sites of the **black-browed albatross**, which stretch for several kilometres. Close to The Neck along this rocky coastline are **king cormorants** and **southern rockhopper penguins**. A stream running off the mountain provides the penguins with a refreshing shower! Watch out for deep claw marks in the rocks where the birds have been making their way to and from the sea for many thousands of years. Further colonies of penguins and albatross are to the north and east of Rookery Mountain.

The historic ruins of the first British settlement at Port Egmont (marked with a plaque) are a 30 minute walk along the coast from the present Settlement. Here are the newly restored graves of Royal Marines killed during a battle with the Spanish who briefly took possession of Port Egmont in the 1770s. The south western part of the Island has many pools and ponds which are home to both **silvery** and **white-tufted grebes**, and the occasional **black-necked swan**.



Southern rockhopper penguin



Commerson's Dolphin

Protecting wildlife from invasive species



The presence of cats and mice on Saunders Island has reduced the number of songbirds here, though some survive in the more sheltered and shrubby valleys. The chicks of ground-nesting birds, such as the Falkland skua (above) are also at risk. It is crucial that areas of wildlife importance in the Falkland Islands are kept free of invasive species.

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: Alan Henry, Ali Liddle, Tim Mason, David Pole-Evans and Kevin Schafer.

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.

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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

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.

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www.falklandsconservation.com

Or contact ukadmin@conservation.org.fk for more options.

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